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OR

LIFE IN THE LAND OF THE CARLISTS AT THE OUTBREAK OF THE INSURRECTION

1872–1873

B 2787

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE IRON MINES IN THE VICINITY OF BILBAO

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a.c

ILLUSTRATED by a MAP and by EIGHT ORIGINAL SKETCHES

HENRY S. KING & CO.
65 CORNHILL AND 12 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
1874

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PREFACE.

THE earlier part of this small work consists of an actual journal and letters home, written during a visit to the North of Spain in the autumn and winter of the year 1872.

But not having remained long enough in the country to form more than very slight views of the outside of people and things, I have brought to my aid, for the completion of the sketch, the greater experience and deeper insight of relatives who have been much longer resident in the country, and who have kindly allowed me to make use of their materials. The narrative of events in the beginning of the year 1873 is entirely taken from their

letters, and owes its principal interest for general readers to the history it gives of the present Carlist insurrection, from its early unimportant beginning, through its growth to its present magnitude. The portion of the account belonging to the summer of 1873 is furnished by these relatives from journals and remembrances, as letters to England were at that time so often interrupted or hastily written that they were found too imperfect to be turned to much account. The concluding chapters on the country and people, and the mines, are the work of the gentleman of the party, whose residence of nearly two years in that part of Spain, and knowledge of the language, has enabled him to give details which may be interesting at a time when very important events are attracting the attention of other countries to that usually tranquil and self-contained region, and which may also be of assistance to those enterprising English who will again flock

to the El Dorado of Spain, whenever peace is sufficiently restored to give the hope of turning to account its wonderful resources, and reaping the wealth which must reward their ample development.

This work pretends to no great literary merit, and at any other period there would have seemed small reason for giving it to the public; but it has been the experience of the writers, somewhat to their cost, that travellers have seldom written of these provinces of Spain, and so little is known about them that there seems room for information of any kind, and in however slight a form. Some sketches made on the spot have been added to increase the interest of the descriptions, and the small map may be found useful. It was made in the country and is perfectly correct, though many of the names will only be met with in local maps (those in capitals denoting districts). They often figure in the telegrams and ac-

counts of the present war, and are not contained in any map in the hands of English people.

General Moriones' and Marshal Serrano's recent attempts to reach Bilbao from the direction of Castro would be well understood by a glance at this small plan of the country.

ELLEN BURGES.

April 13, 1874.

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VIZCAYA.

PART I.

JOURNALS AND LETTERS.

CHAPTER I.

FROM PARIS TO MIRANDA.

PARIS: Sunday, October 13, 1872.

. . . . .

IT IS PLEASANT to think that my travels are not to end with Paris on this occasion. I have never appreciated its attractions as do most people, and having visited in the spring the scenes of devastation caused by its German foes, and by the still greater foes of its 'own household,' I do not care now to linger; however, Sunday must be quietly spent somewhere. I wonder whether many English people know

the American Church in the Rue Bayard, where there is a very hearty service, similar to that of the Church of England, with good music; and the few differences, to which some might object, seem to me to come of earnest thought and devotional feeling.

There is an immense bound of heart and spirit always at the idea of exploring a new country, even in a railway carriage; and now this exhilaration is greatly increased by the prospect of seeing familiar faces in the unfamiliar country, and of finding a haven of rest at the end, whatever may be the difficulties of the way.

On the way to Bordeaux:
Monday, October 14.

The through night-journey to Bordeaux, which is the most rapid, and therefore generally made, would not suit me and my travelling companion, who want to see all we can of this new country; so we betake ourselves to the chemin de fer d'Orleans, at half-past ten

in the morning, and, having registered our heavy baggage through to the Spanish frontier, go to the platform to select our seats.

We were first of all tempted by the advantages of a coupé, but resigned them for the pleasure of companionship and the improvement of conversation in a foreign tongue. We were for some time observers only of our travelling companions, consisting of a very well-dressed, handsome lady of about thirty, and a family party of father, mother, and two children, belonging probably to the class of tradespeople, but intelligent and kindly.

How curiously French people make themselves at ease and at home under all circumstances! Our fellow-travellers of the family group chatter to each other as they might do in a private room in their own house, and feed themselves and their children with the same disregard of spectators and observers. I expected to see our handsome, well-dressed travelling companion shrink back from the greasy

fingers of a small child gnawing the leg of a fowl; but if she did gather her rich silk a little tighter about her, she did it with a benevolent smile; and when the mother, after some hours of effort to keep her infants quiet and amused, began to judge by her own feelings of those of her fellow-travellers, and apologised for the *ennui* they were causing, the lady without encumbrance said, pleasantly, 'Les enfants ne sont jamais ennuyeux—quelquefois pour les messieurs, peut-être, mais jamais pour les dames.'

I am afraid I should hardly have expressed myself so tolerantly; but toleration seems to be the order of the day, for in answer to my inquiry as to how a fearful scar had been caused on the cheek of one of the children, the father answered, 'Il a été mordu par un chien de chasse, l'enfant lui tirait la queue, mais le chien n'était pas méchant, et nous l'avons toujours!' I often hear people speak of the country traversed by this line of railway as uninterest-

ing, but I cannot agree with them. We first of all got up a little excitement over some names of stations which became familiar to us in the letters from the 'Army of the Loire;' and whilst we are wondering whether some half-ruined barns and houses had known anything about German shells, the towers of the cathedral church of Orleans itself come in sight, and the neighbourhood of this city gives us plenty to look at and think about for the space of some miles. Next we catch a glimpse of Blois and of some picturesque châteaux which adorn that district, and the rivers Loire, Cher, and Indre come into view sufficiently often for us constantly to be on the look out for them in their windings through the fertile plains, which the inhabitants like to call the garden of France.

We are sorry to miss by one week the grape-gathering. The vines still adorn the landscape, and a beautiful adornment it is, especially in the case of those red-tinted vines, the colour of the Virginia creeper, and which,

I am told, produce a dark grape for colouring purposes. It would make a beautiful ornamental creeper for our own houses and verandahs, and I wonder it is not introduced into England.

Bordeaux: Monday night, October 14.

Some time after dark we reached Angoulême, the dinner station, where a first-rate repast of more than the usual courses is served with magical rapidity; but though the waiters are quick, the eaters are not allowed to be. Every five minutes the head waiter calls out, 'Ne vous pressez pas, messieurs, il y a encore vingt minutes,' or 'dix minutes,' as the case may be.

We reached Bordeaux at the appointed time, ten o'clock, and, having only to care for some handbags for the night's use, were quickly in a voiture driving in the moonlight along the handsome quay of the city to the Hôtel de France. I do not advise anyone to drive up late, even to a good hotel in a good

French town, without previous announcement. Such stray people (as we seemed to be considered) get scant comfort and attendance.

It was not worth while to remonstrate against the dingy ground-floor bedrooms which were all they would assign to us, though the house seemed empty, as we shall leave them at 7.30 to-morrow morning; but it needs good spirits and experience of travel not to feel a heart-sinking at the sight and smell of such apartments.

On the way to Bayonne:
Tuesday, October 15, 1872.

We are glad to look forward to being well expected and cared for at our halt at Miranda this evening, after our comfortless experiences of last night. We were rather startled on leaving Bordeaux to find ourselves driven to a different railway station from the one we left last night, but we discovered to our satisfaction that we were still on the proper line, which has a station at each extremity of the town.

On reaching the window to procure our tickets, we found it beset by a crowd of 'religieuses,' in convent attire, who were making their way as pilgrims to Lourdes. An excited altercation was going on between the clerk and the leader of the party, whose powers of calculating francs and sous seemed to be of the lowest order, and who evidently would not be convinced that the man was not imposing upon herself and her 'sisters.' There was something rather piteous in her helpless, unintelligent look as she gazed at the change given to her out of two or three napoleons, and one could not help wondering what would be the fate of a party confided to such a head. At last the clerk, losing all patience, turned to transact his business with me, and a priest standing by remarked to the bewildered nun, 'Tu n'arriveras jamais au Paradis, ma fille, de ce pas-là.'

After we got into the railway carriage we saw these black-robed pilgrims rushing frantically about the platform to take their seats;

and two of the party who refused to go in any carriage that did not contain a certain 'Sœur Clotilde' were ultimately left screaming on the platform when the train moved off.

The morning is very chilly, and, although so early in the winter season, the vegetation on each side of the line is thickly covered with a rimy frost. We have not travelled far before we find ourselves deep in the forest of firs which now covers the district known as the Landes.

Twenty or thirty years ago I heard people talk of this undertaking of planting that hitherto unavailable territory, and I believe some English speculators joined in the scheme, which is one that must be bringing in enormous profits at this time; the trees then planted being now of great value for railway and similar undertakings, for which they are transported to all parts of the world, to say nothing of the constant yield of turpentine from these same trees, which are tapped

at a few feet from the ground, and a cup is inserted to catch the precious juice. I am told that this bleeding process rather diminishes the value of the timber, which lasts a shorter time when deprived of its preservative spirit.

The only station that we look at with any interest in the midst of the forest is Arcachon, or rather the junction of the short line that leads to this new watering-place, where English friends now are often going to pick up the health which is supposed to be derived from the resinous odours of the fir forest.

In the railway at Bayonne.

We were very weary of the unbroken monotony of the forest part of our journey, which, excepting at the stations, is scarcely enlivened by a human being. One notable individual we did see, mounted on a stout pony, in the hunting dress of a French picture, with a large horn round him, and followed by

a troop of dogs like beagles; but he had also a short gun, and whether he was bent on hunting or shooting we were at a loss to determine: perhaps he meant to be prepared for either sport.

At one cleared place in the forest we had a view for some distance of the lovely Pyrenees in the neighbourhood of Pau, with an exquisite intervening country stretching like a land of promise beyond our wilderness of sand; but *our* land of promise lay in another direction, and it was not till we were approaching Bayonne that we caught sight of the Bay of Biscay, with its boundary of Spanish Pyrenees, stretching away fifty or sixty miles to the west, and we wondered under which of the beautifully shaped peaks our refuge at Portugalete would be found.

We have had our déjeûner at a station called Monçeaux; here at Bayonne we remain some little time and change our carriages, but now we are off again, and our interest and

excitement increase as we feel nearing the Spanish frontier, but it is not as near as we expect.

We pass Biarritz, where English faces look in at the carriages, and we have Spanish fellow-travellers for the first time—an aristocratic, well-looking young man of stately manners, and an older man with a very young wife. I can understand very little Spanish, but I gather that the pair are going to Madrid, and I guess that it may be a wedding journey, and that they have been spending their honey-moon at the fashionable French watering-place. The man seems more French than Spanish, and sometimes addresses himself in French to the grandee, who also is at home in that language.

Hendaye, the last station on the French frontier.

I was in some slight perturbation as we neared this place with its custom-house, having been told that travellers are asked for passports

on the French side as much as on the Spanish, in order to put a double check upon the Carlist movements, which are still a cause of some anxiety to the government of King Amadeo, although the party is greatly scattered, if not subdued. As an Englishwoman there was small chance of my passport being demanded, and my companion was too young a boy to be looked upon as dangerous; so I was not surprised, though just a little relieved, when the officer of the Douane said, 'Vous êtes Anglais, vous n'avez pas besoin de passeports.'

The gentleman with the wife drew out his immediately and handed it to the official, merely remarking in French that it was very 'ennuyeux' not to be able to go a distance of a few leagues without being required to show a passport twice over; but when the turn of the aristocrat came, he shook his head sullenly. The Douanier again and again demanded the passport, when at last he said, 'Je n'ai pas de passeport à vous donner.' 'Alors, monsieur, il faut que

vous descendiez,' answered the Douanier, and seemed inclined to use force to make his words effectual. The Spaniard looked at him as, I should imagine, a Spaniard looks at a man before he draws a knife upon him, and I really began to be alarmed, when to my surprise he suddenly quieted down, put his hand into the breast pocket of his coat, pulled out a passport, deliberately opened it, and presented it to the Douanier with the most haughty, contemptuous look it is possible to imagine; and whilst the official, with another who had come to his aid, was turning the article in every direction to discover some mysterious or suspicious cause for its being so long withheld, the Spaniard broke into the most furious-sounding Spanish expressions, and it was some time after the document had been restored to him that he ceased to inveigh (as I imagine) against the insolence of the French nation, which had presumed to interfere with the return of a Spaniard to his own country.

On the way to Miranda.

During the short distance intervening between Hendaye, the last French station, and Irun, the first Spanish, separated by the river Bidassoa, I felt rather afraid of my irascible neighbour, who I imagined felt the common Spanish hatred of the foreigner. Accordingly, when we left the train at Irun, and it was time for me to think of claiming my baggage registered at Paris, and supposed to be forwarded in last night's train, I was reluctant to address myself to him on the subject, although he was just the person I wanted, being able to speak French and Spanish, and, like ourselves, with forty minutes' leisure at the station before proceeding in the train to Miranda.

After finding, however, the hopelessness of making myself understood by the Spanish officials, who, notwithstanding their close proximity to French territory, seemed to under-

stand nothing of that language, I appealed to my late travelling companion, who had speedily been set free from the inspection of his own person and baggage by the Douaniers, and was of course smoking his cigar, and looking quite serene again. He immediately placed himself at my 'disposition,' and accompanied me to the different depôts of luggage which had arrived independently of passengers, but it was soon sadly evident that my two large portmanteaux were not in any of them. The case seemed too hopeless for me to prolong inquiry, and, as I did not wish to disappoint the friends who intended joining us at Miranda, I made up my mind to proceed with only the portable things we possessed, and my obliging friend most kindly wrote out in Spanish careful directions for the forwarding of the missing articles to Bilbao, as soon as they should arrive or be discovered. I did not feel entire confidence as to ever seeing them again, and was all the more anxious to reach my friends

at Miranda, and take their advice on the matter.

After securing some luncheon we were beginning to think of taking our tickets on and our seats in the train, when I saw Señor, hurrying towards me along the platform; and he quickly gave me the welcome intelligence that there had been a further arrival of baggage from France, and that he believed my things were amongst it. I hastened to the Salle of the Douane, and there, to my great joy, found my two boxes on the long bench, with a man standing by each ready to open it when I produced my keys. There were still twenty minutes before the departure of the train, and I did not feel that there was any cause for hurry or excitement, and rather wondered to see the phlegmatic Spaniards in a great bustle over the investigation of the contents of the boxes, which was performed in a very hasty manner, and then each box was hurriedly shouldered and carried to the weighing-machine

close to the platform. I followed them without misgiving; but on arriving there I saw looks of dismay on the faces of the men, who, pointing to the clock, made me understand that the weighing-clerk was accustomed to leave his desk a quarter of an hour before the train started, and that my things could neither be weighed nor forwarded; so, after all my flattering hopes of carrying away my possessions, I seemed doomed still to have to leave them behind me.

Whilst, however, conferring with my companion, who was already ensconced in the corner of a carriage, a young man of pleasant aspect mounted into it, and addressing myself to him in French, which he understood, I explained the situation to him; his sympathy was immediate, and exclaiming, 'Mais cela ne doit pas être,' he jumped out of the carriage, and ran along the platform to some place which he knew as the retreat of the weighing-clerk, and from which he brought him forth with angry

Spanish vociferation, and never left him till he saw my luggage weighed and tossed into the train; he then presented me the ticket with a profound bow, just as the train was starting, and took his own seat in another carriage—I should think to avoid my thanks, which, if they had been equal to my emotions, would certainly have been rather overpowering.

For some time after leaving the station at Irun, my thoughts were occupied most gratefully by the two unexpected helpers that had sprung up for my assistance on my first setting foot on Spanish soil, and I came to the conclusion that it should take many instances of an opposite kind to rob me of my faith in Spanish chivalry, even in these modern degenerate days. My present co-voyagers are a French lady and gentleman and a French-speaking Spaniard. The gentleman with the wife seems to be resident in Madrid, and to be a jeweller on a large scale, judging by his conversation. His wife looks out of spirits

and 'souffrante.' He says for her that she does not like returning to Madrid after spending some time in Paris; that she fancies the climate does not suit her; but it is all fancy, the climate is an excellent one, and suits him exactly. It is true that the summers are suffocatingly hot and dry, and the winters so cold that his wife does not put her head out of doors; but then people have very good health there all the same, and so would his wife if she only thought so. I do not feel inclined to agree with him, for the poor lady's cough betokens a state of lungs to which such a climate of trying extremes must surely be most aggravating, and I am wondering how long it will be before her light-hearted husband has realised the danger of it to her.

He is a kind man, nevertheless, and after I had left the carriage at Beasain, to procure some rolls and grapes to make up for the deficient meal which we were too much perturbed to make into a good one at Irun,

he produced a splendid rolled Bayonne tongue, which made our excellent white rolls into a first-rate and satisfying repast; and we began to feel able to appreciate the wonderful scenery into and out of which we seemed to plunge, for the windings of the railway, sometimes through tunnels, and sometimes over skeleton viaducts suspended across mountain gorges, were changing our prospect with the rapidity of dissolving views; and before we had half seen enough of the beauties of one mountain valley, we dashed into the darkness, and emerged upon another, or seemed for a time to have arrived in a country of quite a different character.

I must go back if I describe Passages, which comes soon after Irun; an arm of the sea locked by abrupt rocky hills, which, but for the sea-going vessels at anchor there, one would imagine to have no connection with the great ocean. San Sebastian will always be a sound of interest to British ears; but it is

growing into a large, unromantic-looking watering-place, and I believe that both French and Spaniards are fond of resorting there. Tolosa is the largest place I have seen from the railway; not very large, however, and has not a look of importance, lying amongst hills and appearing rather inaccessible. I shall soon find it too dark to continue my observations.

We have just passed through the most oppressive tunnel that I was ever in, and, as we literally climb the mountain in going through it, the progress is painfully slow, and, on coming out into light at the top, the wind was so powerful that I half expected the train to be blown over; however, we have reached the highest elevation, and are in comparatively flat country on the top; and I am told there is no great interest in the view before reaching Vittoria, which we shall only be able to see in the moonlight.

Miranda: Tuesday evening, October 15.

The name Miranda is melodious enough, but there is nothing very soft or attractive in the appearance of the place as we steam up to it in the moonlight. It seems to stand in the midst of a large peat moss, with weird mountain peaks cut out against the sky in the distance; however, the bleak railway station looks the most cheerful place we have seen since we left home, when we discern the well-known English faces which have come here to greet us, and the magic of their welcome converts the well-lighted, but cold, bare 'salon' into a fairy palace.

The long tables of the buffet were quickly filled by passengers from trains that had arrived from more than one direction, who meet here to dine hurriedly, and to separate in less than half an hour; so we crossed a yard to the sleeping part of the establishment, an hotel quite distinct from the re-

freshment rooms, and there found our clean, neatly-prepared bedrooms to add to our cheeriness. In summer time they would be even more attractive than they are at present; a want of colour makes them look a little cold just now, though intensely clean. We have been having a first Spanish dinner at the buffet, served to us after the departure of the travelling guests, and it has proved a very good and enjoyable one.

I am told that the cooking at this station is more French than Spanish, but the arrangements of the table are certainly Spanish. The lumps of frothed and dried sugar are a decided novelty. I am told that they are intended for the preparation of the 'eau sucrée,' of which Spaniards are so fond; accordingly, they are put in glasses within reach of every part of the table. The 'vin ordinaire' is certainly not French; and when I learn that its peculiar taste comes from the skins in which it is carried being prepared with tar, I do not feel

inclined to adopt it as a beverage. However, it is very, very pleasant to find oneself in a country where there is something new to experience, although the experiences may not always be pleasant.

CHAPTER II.

LETTERS HOME.

. . . . .

Portugalete: October 16.

We had too much talking to do at Miranda for a long entry in my journal, so I must make up for it by my home letter. What a refreshing night we had in those clean white beds, and with the restful feeling that the responsibilities of our further journey were in other and more competent hands!

My last impression as I fell asleep was the soothing sound of the evening orisons of the hotel establishment, which reached my ears from a room below. The responses of the 'Solemn Litany' seemed to rise from a large number of voices, and this religious acknow-

ledgment, whatever may have been its words or its purport, seemed at least to say, 'The God of Peace shall be with you.' It was not a very long night, however, for it was not yet light when I was aroused, according to orders, by a knock at my door and the unwonted call of 'Cinco y media' from the Spanish chambermaid. I heard her proceed down the long passage with the same awakening summons at each door, for the early morning trains, like the evening ones, seem to make rendezvous at Miranda at about the same hour, and between six and half-past the travellers in three different directions must be ready for their different trains.

The arrangements for this one night's halt are all conducted in a business-like manner. About five minutes after the 'réveil' comes the second call of 'Agua caliente,' and when the ready-dressed traveller puts his head out of his door he sees the porter ready to shoulder his luggage, and the chambermaid standing by, in

her large white apron, to claim from the departing guest the charge for his night's lodging, which includes no eating expenses in this part of the establishment. These must be paid at the buffet on the other side of the station, where we had just time to get some cups of hot coffee and rolls before taking our seats in the train for Bilbao.

The country around Miranda looked more dreary in the early morning light than even in the moonlight of the evening before, but I was mistaken in supposing that there was anything of the peat moss nature about the soil; a great part of it seems even more sterile and unsuited to vegetation than an Irish bog, being largely composed of sand and rock which in summer time must be as dry as an Arabian desert. For nearly an hour there was nothing to interest us outside the carriage windows; but we had a pleasant time of it, nevertheless, in exchanging the accounts of our travelling adventures. We had a good

deal to hear of A. and R.'s trip to Burgos, where they were as much enchanted as are most travellers with the gorgeous cathedral; and we were amused by their account of 'roughing it amongst the mountains' in that neighbourhood, where they found delicious air and beautiful scenery; but the comforts of life were scanty enough.

The only habitable house in one village was that of the Curé, and the amount of civilisation even there was so small that a washing utensil of any kind did not belong to the establishment, and my people took advantage of the Curé's absence at early mass to perform their ablutions at the sink. He was very much horrified at the risk of using so much water, and assured them that he had not washed more than his face and hands for twenty years, and that it would be his death if he did so. His arrangements for food were as little promising as those for cleanliness, and his English visitors professed a

violent passion for milk and eggs in the hope of securing something that could not be unpleasantly tampered with, and happily these were good and abundant. They have learned the wisdom of carrying with them certain portable provisions on these rough expeditions, but they were afraid of hurting the feelings of their kindly-intentioned host by producing them on this occasion; they ventured, however, to make some tea, which was a novel beverage to the Curé, and he did his best to try and like it; but his grimaces, as he persistently sipped it, showed him to be no real convert.

He tried conversion of another kind upon his lady visitor, who must have appeared a more hopeful subject than he was in the matter of the tea, for he assured her he would make a good Catholic of her in a week if she would only remain with him.

By the time the landscape scene from our railway carriage was in bright daylight it was becoming very grand and interesting. We had

kept a mountain stream in view a good part of the way, and our progress was upwards in regard to its course, for without being much aware of it we were continually ascending to higher ground; at length we found that the mountain streams were running in the same direction with ourselves, and the grandeur of the scenery on the descending side of the mountains was becoming more and more striking; but our attention to the scenery was divided by our wonder at the marvellous construction of the line of railway, which to accomplish its descent from the top of the mountain makes the most wonderful curves and 'détours.'

One sees at no great apparent distance, but deep below, a portion of the line which it is difficult to believe we can ever be destined to reach; indeed, we seem to travel right away from it, and out of sight. The most remarkable spot of this kind is one where there is a loop of seven or eight miles

round a valley, and where the nearest points are not above two or three hundred yards apart, though at very different elevations; and the wonder was increased, as we came to the narrow part, by the approach of a train in the opposite direction, which after pursuing its course as we did ours for more than half an hour, ultimately passed us at the town of Orduña, in the bottom of the valley, and where on this single line the trains to and from Bilbao are in the habit of passing each other by a siding.

There was something to say about Orduña as we came up to it. Notwithstanding its mountain situation it is a town of some importance in the district, being the old capital of Vizcaya, and was a refuge of Carlist troop during the rising in the early part of this spring. It is not a place of an encouraging aspect, and we were not sorry when our halt there came to an end. The course of the railway is straighter from this point, but is not

without its remarkable features, as there are many intersecting valleys and ravines to be traversed, with their tempting-looking trout streams; and I believe the long-continued steepness of the descending gradient, requiring enormous break-power, is in itself something of a wonder to engineers, and would be of apprehension to nervous travellers if they only knew the utter destruction into which the failure of this controlling force would plunge them.

We were sorry to travel into thick rain as we approached Bilbao, and a fellow-traveller tells us that it has been raining continually for nine days. I hope this is the end of it; but a long spell of wet weather is not unusual in the autumn and winter, I am told, on the sea side of the mountains, and as it very frequently comes with a north wind there is an amount of chilliness at such times which is no improvement upon the climate of England, and so far my dreams of the 'sunny South' have not been much realised. However, I am told of a late

summer yet to come, corresponding with the Indian summer of which we talk at home, but which here is something more than a name.

I was surprised at the important look of the Bilbao railway station. Things had seemed on so small a scale on the railway that I did not expect so good a building at its termination. A.'s own carriage not proving sufficiently capacious for all our party and luggage, we chartered a second one, also belonging to the town, to convey us to the pension of Señora Iturrizaga, where we were glad to partake of a substantial 'déjeûner' at about twelve o'clock.

The food and cooking we found extremely good and appetising; but here also I was told it was hardly a fair specimen of Spanish cookery, as the pension had been the resort of English engineers during the construction of the railway, twelve or fourteen years ago, and the lady of the house had learnt the tastes of her English guests, and found it for her interest to comply with them; accordingly the smell of

oil and garlic, which reached us from the kitchen premises, did not pervade the food that was set before us, and the excellent white bread of two or three different kinds would have been a luxury in itself if the rest of the repast had been more indifferent. I will not describe Bilbao on a rainy day, for I hope to see it under brighter auspices; nor can I say much about the drive to Portugalete, which the weather compelled us to take in a closed carriage. It has made a painful impression, however, in one respect, for the week's rain has converted a good part of the road there into a perfect slough; and in those parts where there is incessant traffic with the iron ore carts to the bank of the river, it is all but impassable, and we began to think we should require the services of some of the oxen to drag us out of the deep ruts.

. . . . .

Portugalete: October 17.

I must try and describe this place, but it is not like any place I ever saw before. I suppose its steep, narrow, principal street, which nothing less sure-footed than a mule ever ventures down, and no wheels of any kind, must be something like Clovelly, in Devonshire; but along the bank of the river Nervion, which, confined at this point between quays terminating in two short piers, is not very wide, there is a row of handsome modern houses, some of them scarcely completed, and in front of them there is a capital promenade, covered by asphalte, and bounded by a low wall.

As the Spaniards are not adventurous, and do not often take country walks, this esplanade is thickly crowded during the season months of July, August, and September. To vary their recreations they can cross the river

PORTUGALETE FROM LAS ARENAS

in a constantly-plying ferry-boat to 'Las Arenas' (or the Sands), on the opposite side, where are some houses and a very large hotel. On that side also is the best bathing, and the sands are covered in the hot season by stationary machines, which are kept in full occupation by men, women, and children. It is possible to bathe on the Portugalete side, but the sands there are limited; besides which, too bold a swimmer may easily get into difficulties in the strong current at the mouth of the river.

The house we occupy stands alone, near the edge of the steep cliff, which makes a background to the new part of the town. The usual way of reaching the esplanade and waterside is by a long flight of covered wooden steps, which are rather toilsome to ascend; but it is worth some labour to reach the higher level, where a fresher air is always blowing, and where we escape the unpleasant odours which the bad construction of Spanish houses,

and the untidy habits of their occupants, are apt to produce wherever they congregate. Moreover, on this hill top, we have access to the high road, upon which the garden and stable-yard open.

The view from the top of the house, or 'Mirador,' must have been beautiful before the new houses were built; in fact, it still commands all the distant prospects of river, sea, and mountains, but loses some of the near parts of the river, with the constant traffic of ships of all sizes and nations. These are still seen to great advantage as they make for the mouth of the river, under the pilotage of the Santurce boatmen, who come out in a powerful crew of eight or twelve men, with the master pilot at their head, in obedience to a summons for which they are always on the look-out at the headland of Santurce, about a mile off. There is an inner bay intervening between the mouth of the river and the great turbulent Bay of Biscay; but there is peril even in these

quieter waters, for a dangerous bar of shifting sand stretches right across the river's mouth; and as every tide makes some change in the disposition of the sand, and in the place where it is safe to cross it, not a vessel ventures to enter without either the assistance of the pilot or of the signal-man, who, in his small tower at the end of the pier, indicates to the arriving mariner where he may find the 'pathway of safety,' by the slope of a flag-staff with a red flag, which is regulated by a wheel. This, in some states of the weather, is not to be found anywhere, nor can loaded vessels of large burden cross the bar at any but the spring tides, so that it occasionally happens in the winter months that for two or three weeks not a vessel can enter or leave the river.

This obstacle to the largely increasing traffic with this district is a subject of much consideration to those interested in the prosperity of Bilbao, and many schemes are afloat for remedying this great difficulty by works on

a large scale; but Spaniards are slow to settle anything, especially so where a large outlay is involved, and still more especially when it is necessary to employ English talent to devise and carry out their schemes; for their dislike to foreign interference, and jealousy of what the foreigner may gain by them, makes them a most impracticable people to deal with; and, although several of our best known engineers have given in plans and estimates on the subject, it seems almost as far as ever off a settlement.

If ever it is effectually set on foot it will be a grand advantage to the port, and also to the coast; for the most extensive plan includes a harbour of refuge, with works of something like the magnitude of Portland breakwater, to cost over a million of money, and to take fifteen years to complete.

I must go on to describe our view from the 'Mirador,' which on the sea side is not at all bounded by the white line of foam which con-

stantly marks this dangerous bar, although it has interrupted my account of the scene. The pilot station at Santurce even is far from being its furthest limit in that direction, for we see full sailing vessels beyond the headland an hour or two before they come sufficiently near to communicate with the pilot; and on the opposite side of our small bay is the lighthouse of Algorta, with steep, dark rocks washed by the waves, and the hill covered by cheerful-looking houses which compose the town of the same name. On the level of the sea, and nearer to us, are the sands of Las Arenas, backed by low hills, over which the sand has been carried by the north-west wind till it reminds one of the sand-hills near Burnham, in Somersetshire.

There are some low sea-side growths in places, and an attempt has been made, but with poor result, at a fir plantation; but, notwithstanding the apparently slight temptations of the spot, this fine day after long rain has brought down troops of Bilbainos, who are

crowding the road at the back of the sands and up the hill beyond, on foot and in diligences.

The large hotel seems closed for the winter season; but there is a great deal of business evidently going on at the smaller one near the river, the front of which is crowded with carriages of all sorts that have set down their occupants, and the excellent level road along the river towards Bilbao is still alive with further arrivals. What can they all come for? is the question, and it is one that no one seems to have solved to his satisfaction; but we will not trouble ourselves any more about them at present, for the range of mountains of different elevation and beautiful form, which make a background to more than half of the panorama, are going through those changes of exquisite colour, which we can never see in our northern climate, and which, not having seen, no painting or fancy can possibly depict—partly, I think, because the effect, like the melody in music, is made up of changes of marvellous beauty,

which, taking place differently in different places at the same time, produce the pleasurable sensations of a succession of perfectly-modulated harmonies; and when the loss of the sunshine sobers all down again into the mere beauty of shape, and the mere grey of distance, we feel that our 'fantasia' has ended, as it ought to have done, on its key-note.

October 22.

Our Indian summer is not yet come, and we begin to think we must make ourselves comfortable with English fires. Some grates and chimneys were put into this house in the spring to fit it for English occupation, and we were anxious to know how they would act. They seem to do very well as long as they are helped by a good deal of charcoal; but the coals are infamously bad, and take a great deal of bellows to fan them into anything like flame or heat. When we can get some dry wood we shall do better.

The apparatus for kitchen purposes in this,

as in other houses, consists of a large projection covered with white tiles, and about the height of a table; there is draught from the front to several small holes for charcoal, and there is a wide chimney with a hood to enclose the entire erection and carry up the charcoal fumes; but here it is turned to further account, for a small movable English grate has been arranged upon it, which, in spite of smoke and other drawbacks, accomplishes most of the English processes of roasting, boiling, and baking with tolerable success. The Spanish servants do not appear to estimate our English fare, and turn from it to a horrible mess prepared by themselves of coarse-looking capsicums and onions with undisguised pleasure; and I am told that the colza oil, which is kept for the lamps, is too irresistible a temptation to be left in unlimited quantities within their reach.

I do not hear a very good account of the Spanish servants in this matter of pilfering. A

mistress of a house in this part of Spain looks after her housekeeping so closely that a servant is not trained to withstand any temptation, and in fact seems to consider herself entitled to all food that is left about; even the sugar basin is emptied in a morning, to say nothing of the more tempting dessert dishes with fruit and confectionery which an English waiting-maid would think sacred. I do not hear that this disrespect of property at all extends to money; and probably it is not a fault of the nature of dishonesty, but a defect arising out of the close vigilance of their Spanish employers, who leave nothing within reach of servants that is not intended for their use.

In other respects I am agreeably surprised in the servants I find here; two young women in this establishment, who came with no special recommendations, prove good and clever servants. 'Concha' is an excellent waitress and beautiful needlewoman; her darning is a work of art; and whenever she has

the opportunity of displaying her skill as an ironer, we come to the conclusion that it will be a very advantageous arrangement to turn her to account in this department, for at present the washing and ironing are done at great inconvenience in separate establishments at Bilbao. A Spanish washerwoman does not undertake the ironing department, which is usually done at home by the lady of the house and her maidens, and it is no easy matter to get the ironing otherwise provided for.

The washing seems to be both bad and destructive; and how it is accomplished at all by the unpromising method of beating and rubbing on the stones, which I saw yesterday in the stream above Portugalete, I should never have been able to understand, if I had not caught sight of a large paper full of some kind of bleaching powder, which is probably rubbed on the linen in the first place, and would account for the thin look and sundry holes in all the articles which have

been washed for any time in this country. However, there seems no remedy for this part of the washing difficulty. A Spanish servant will not wash though she will iron; and it is questionable, I think, even, whether she would give a hand to a washing-machine, though she performs many more arduous tasks.

The so-called housemaid in this establishment carries pails of water on her head up 180 wooden steps, and it is supposed is only learning to think it a hardship because the English cook sets her the example, and will not be induced to give the help of a finger to the work. Both the Spaniards read, write, and keep accounts; and though my small knowledge of their language keeps me from much conversation with them, I have plenty of proofs of their intelligence, which I think is much beyond that of an average English servant. They seem, too, loyal and willing; but I fancy their tempers are not altogether perfect, and that queer, incomprehensible little jealousies may

make them in the end troublesome, as they already show some signs of being.

The groom, or coachman, Juan, is a bright, pleasant-faced being, seems fond of his horses, and attached to his employers; he too, however, has his pride and his fancies, and declines to wear a livery or similar badge of servitude. I suppose these Biscayans, who consider nobility their birthright, have some peculiarities of this kind; but I imagine they are more than made up for by their superiority in morality and intelligence over other Spaniards. They are, besides, a far more vigorous and industrious race; and when on a Sunday or holiday we see amongst them the Castilian labourers, whom abundance of work has brought into the neighbourhood, we are struck by the contrast of their ragged, puny looks with the sturdy, well-clothed aspect of the Biscayans.

Before I leave the subject of domesticities, I will try and describe the interior of this abode, which, however, is hardly a specimen of an

ordinary house in Biscay, being a sort of 'villa residence' built by a well-to-do tradesman in Bilbao, partly as a sea-side retreat for his family from the heat of the town during the summer months, and partly as a profitable speculation; for during the bathing season the poorly-furnished houses in this place fetch the high price of sumptuous abodes in Folkestone or Brighton. I believe that each flat of seven or eight rooms in this house has let for no less than seven guineas a week. If its owner were not a tradesman it would not be let on any terms. The aristocrats who indulge in country or sea-side residences, and shut them up for nine or ten months in the year, will on no account admit a tenant.

A. tried in vain to get possession of a house of this kind before he engaged the one he is occupying. It has the fault of being larger than he requires; but he has just had the good fortune to secure English tenants for the lower flat, and some who will be pleasant friends and

neighbours at the same time, making life for him and R. much more cheerful than it has been. There is the common staircase, of course, which is found in almost all houses abroad, and the flats, three in number, are closed off from it by double doors. The rooms are rather small, and have not the ornamentation of French suites, nor have they the same amount of glass doors. On this account they are more capable of snug arrangement, and a little additional furniture of English make has given them very much of an English home look. The original plan gave to each floor its kitchen. The one used by my people is at the top of the house—an admirable arrangement for escaping culinary odours; the servants' rooms are at the top too, and also the dining-room.

The principal peculiarity in each suite is an alcove, or bedroom, shut off from light and air by double, curtained, glass doors. I believe it is the state apartment in all Spanish suites, and preferred to any other. It is quite possible that,

being in the centre of the house, it may be cooler than any other part in hot weather; but while escaping hot air it escapes any air at all, and an ordinary English person would certainly feel stifled by passing a night in one. Habit is a strange thing in such matters, seeming sometimes absolutely to alter what we suppose the very conditions of existence. My people turn this privileged apartment to good use for their reserves of dress and linen, which will certainly be safe there from all the atmospheric changes of this varying climate.

CHAPTER III.

A. AND R.'S EXPERIENCES.

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Portugalete: October 24.

THE wet, stormy weather still continues; and I cannot at present increase my acquaintance with the neighbourhood. I have not been able to spend a day in Bilbao since I came, nor to visit the mine and other works. A. and P. go to one or the other most days, starting early and returning late, wet and dirty; but these would not be pleasure expeditions for ladies, so I must wait awhile; and I have been hearing and learning a great deal which is almost as good as seeing. A. and R.'s journey here in June was rather more adven-

turous than was ours the other day; at any rate, the Spanish part of it.

At San Sebastian they were stopped by the intelligence that the railway line between Miranda and Bilbao was still interrupted by the Carlists; but, finding no diligence there to take them the road journey, they travelled by railway to Zumarraga, and there took advantage of the conveyance which, even in peaceful times, is used to carry the post across the mountains to Bilbao. It was a night journey, and rather a rough one, over bad roads, in an ill-appointed vehicle; but they enjoyed the scenery in the moonlight, and relieved the monotony by walking up the long hills or mountains, which in some places were so steep that four oxen were required to help their usual team of three mules and two horses.

As is Spanish custom, the driving down hill and on anything of a level was frightfully fast; accidents must sometimes occur, but they are not much heard of. They passed several regi-

ments on the look-out for Carlists, but these last were no longer in possession of the district as they were when A. passed through it in April. They reached Bilbao about two in the morning, and, when they arrived at their home here, found their servants in great alarm at their not having appeared as soon as they were expected, and the men had been out all night trying to make some inquiries about them. R. is disappointed to find how impossible it is for her to go about alone, even close to home quarters. She was not quite disposed at first to believe what Spaniards told her on this subject, and attempted to walk on the esplanade and pier without a companion, for it is hard on a fine day not to be able to enjoy the outer air; but she was obliged to give it up after very few trials. The idle men of Spain have no respect for unprotected females, and seem to suppose that they challenge notice if, being under thirty-five or forty, they venture out without a duenna. I believe that even the 'safety in

numbers' does not apply here in the case of the young and the feminine.

They say that the summer heat was very great during one or two periods of a fortnight or three weeks, but it would have been infinitely worse in Bilbao; the evening sea breeze, which is more invariable in a hot climate than in a cool one, made the hours after sundown pleasant out of doors, and the nights bearable, though the walls of an isolated house like this became too baked on the sunny sides to cool down again easily.

It is strange how different are the indications of the barometer in this climate from what we are accustomed to in England: it seems to rain quite as often with a high barometer as with a low one. Yesterday there was a shower when it was marking 'very dry.' I should think this difference must be caused by the rain coming much more frequently with a north or north-west wind, which brings the clouds from the Atlantic, than with a south wind, which has

dried itself by passing over the arid central land of Spain; and it certainly proves that the direction of wind has much more to do with the barometer than the amount of moisture the current brings. This ought to be a station of the Meteorological Society; there is none between Biarritz and Corunna, places where the influences must be very different from what they are in this northern aspect, and quite open to the Bay of Biscay.

R. has been giving me an account of King Amadeo's visit at the beginning of August. He arrived from San Sebastian, outside this river, rather late in the afternoon, and was taken on board a frigate from Bilbao; but, owing to a mistake, neither his suite nor his baggage accompanied him; and, the weather being wet and the king wet, there was no great enthusiasm, and they accused the king of being in a very bad humour. Probably he was uncomfortable enough, poor man, to feel cross; for he had no clothes to change, and went through the

ceremonial of a reception and the theatre in the same wet raiment in which he left the ship. He drove twice down to Las Arenas, opposite to Portugalete, during his stay. Prim's widow was residing there at the time, and her young son, a small boy, was elected to the dignity of a page of honour on these occasions. There was a good deal of noise with gunpowder and rockets, but no sign of respect, and no 'vivas' but from small children. He proposed making a visit to one of the large iron mines; but, as they had prepared no better vehicle for his conveyance, on the railway up to the mine, than a truck with a few planks across, I think he was spared some indignity by giving up his intention.

It is very amusing to compare this real account of the popular feeling in this neighbourhood with the letters of the 'Times' correspondent of that period, which certainly gave the hope that the constitutional measures and yet firm attitude of the stranger king were

gradually gaining for him appreciation and respect, even in this part of his dominions where his rule is most strongly objected to. I was not prepared to hear him spoken of as 'cet Amadeo,' with a sort of hiss, by educated persons; or to be told that every man, woman, and child of the peasant class in Biscay is still Carlist to the heart's core.

I do not think I will give you A. and R.'s account of the bull-fights which took place at Bilbao in the third week of August, and which, with the usual desire of English people to see everything, they attended on one of the days, though detesting with all their hearts the whole barbarous exhibition.

Bilbao boasts a good arena. I noticed it as we drove through the place on our arrival; no one can mistake the purpose of the unusual construction, and it is made still more evident by the remaining placards and pictures to attract attention to the last festival. Not only is the arena good, but first-class animals and ma-

tadors grace, or rather disgrace, the performances there.

My people sat out the whole thing, sickening though it was; but they never again intend to go through a similar ordeal, and they do not seem to care to recur to it, so I have not had very minute particulars from them. But I have not been eager for them. The whole neighbourhood is 'en fête' during the days the bull-fights continue; men, women, children, and babies crowd to them, and nothing goes on in its ordinary course during the time.

After each performance there is a gay promenade of the well-dressed company outside the arena, and the last day generally ends with a ball. I believe the number of bulls sacrificed on these occasions varies from three to six, and I think I heard the number of thirty-eight horses named as having been killed on one of the days.

As we are on the subject of horrors, I will mention one of another kind which A.

came across about this time; it was the day after the king's entry into Bilbao, and when, contrary to custom, he and R. drove home to Portugalete in the night-time, after being present at the theatre. Not that I am going to tell of any adventure on that drive, only that they must have had a narrow escape of something frightening and tragical, for as A. very early the next morning was driving over the same ground, he came upon a group of people surrounding the headless body of a man, which had just been discovered by the road-side, but had every appearance of having been some hours in that situation.

There was probably some mystery connected with the occurrence which it was not politic to publish, for little was said about it, and it was not generally known whether any inquiry was ever made as to the subject or object of the murder. It was said at the time that the clothes of the victim must have been

changed after the deed was done, probably to make identification more impossible.

You must not fancy we are in a dangerous country, however, from an isolated case of this kind. The Biscayans are not murderous as a rule, I am told, and few acts of violence are committed, although some of their expressions sound menacing. 'A blow can only be cured with blood' is one of them.

Another tragedy occurred to my people here just before we came out to them, but one that might happen in any country, and is not unfrequent in this, where turpentine mixed with beeswax is largely used to polish the uncarpeted floors; and unhappily a young English maiden of the establishment, whilst incautiously heating the mixture over the charcoal fire in the kitchen, let it catch fire, and then upset it over herself in such quantity that she was hopelessly burnt, and died in five or six hours. It was a painful experience in A. and R.'s

early days here, and made them feel that the isolation of their life in this country has many drawbacks, which are hardly experienced during the smooth and even tenour of things; but in a case of illness or accident the total want of a kind doctor, or clergyman, or nurse, or sympathising friend, makes them feel that the most solitary spot in their own land would be less cut off from the many solaces that follow upon misfortune.

Considering the few English residents in the district, and the entire lack of Church of England ministrations, one is surprised to hear of an English cemetery, but such there is by the side of the river, near Bilbao, well kept, and suitably planted with cypresses; but I imagine the occasions have been very few when a clergyman has read the service there, and the saying of 'every man being a priest in his own house' had to be interpreted widely on this sad occasion, for even the British consul was absent.

There is some interest in their own religion

and church still felt by the few English inhabitants of Bilbao, notwithstanding the neglect they have been living in; for I have heard of one or two families of the working class lately taking their young children by ship to Cardiff to have them baptised.

I suppose most people would imagine this a cheap country to live in, but we have failed to discover that it is so. I can hardly hear of any article that is much cheaper than in England, and many things are very much dearer. Meat sounds cheaper, but it is so lean and unnourishing that I do not believe there is much gained by the difference of two or three pence in the lb. Bread is slightly cheaper, I believe; groceries generally so much dearer that it is worth while to bring them from England. Fruit is dear, with the exception of grapes; milk, poultry, eggs, game, none of them very cheap; nor is good fish at the present time; but I have missed the season of fresh sardines, and some delicacies in that line

of which I am told. The high price of fuel of all kinds is an addition to the cost of food; and, taking all into account, I do not think there is much chance of a residence here proving economical. I do not even think that servants are to be had at very low wages; certainly not desirable ones.

The money here is puzzling. I should say any Spaniard needs to be a fair accountant to transact the most ordinary business. I have not at all arrived at taking in the account the servants here give of their marketing expenditure, and their mistress seems to me a marvel of cleverness to be *au fait* at it. I have reached the understanding of pesetas by assuming them to be of the value of francs, which is as nearly as possible the case, and the real at about 2½d. one can treat as a quarter of a franc; but when one hears of cuartos, which seem to have no relation to either of these, and different coinages of different value, one feels in despair of ever mastering the difficulty; still

more, when, on glancing at an ordinary domestic account book, one sees 100's and 1000's taking the place of units and tens at the bottom of the column of figures.

I will ask A. to make out something of a table one day, in case you care to know more than I can tell you. Weights and measures are also a subject of difficulty to an English housekeeper, and still more to an English servant. In spite of a table of relative values which A. has prepared and hung up in the kitchen, there have been so many failures from wrong quantities that R. has taken to measure out all the ingredients for every culinary preparation.

The pigs and pork of this country are much to be admired; the animals, white, fat, and fine-haired, as they grunt about the cottage doors, look fit for a pig show. I imagine they are fed a good deal upon maize, which is the principal corn of this part of Spain; whatever it is, it suits them. There is a law against the

sale of pork till a certain date at the beginning of winter, I believe November 1. R. is looking forward to the purchase of her hams when the proper day comes, but we have had some small joints of pork at table, sold on the sly, and very excellent they were.

Christmas turkeys are not unknown here. A drove of these birds came into the place a week or two ago, and we can watch the fattening of some of them bought by our neighbours in the houses below, who, in spite of having not an inch of garden ground, and nothing but the court or 'patio' surrounded by the walls of the house, manage to keep lots of poultry of different kinds, which peck about the road during the day and are called in to roost at night. No wonder that Portugalete is famous for its fleas.

Looking upon the roofs of the houses in the row below we can see precisely their arrangement; they are a series of letter E's without the centre bit; perhaps I should have called it

three sides of a square if I had not been thinking of Elizabethan houses. It is a good arrangement for securing a good draught of air and a fair quantity of light to every room, for each side of the square has windows both ways, the kitchen premises and the passage occupying the divisional part, where the fact of looking into a court-yard on each side is not of moment. I have been into one where the staircase is narrow and in the corner of the E, and I imagine they are alike in this respect.

Few families occupy more than one flat of the house, which consists of about eight or nine rooms. If the drainage of the houses were tolerably contrived, and the 'patios' were not the receptacle for fowls and for every sort of refuse which the servants choose to throw into them from the windows, there would be no want of sweetness or healthiness in the place. As it is, one cannot enter one of them without wondering how people remain well in them, which in point of fact they seem to do.

The postal arrangements here are tolerably good and convenient; letters are delivered in the afternoon about five o'clock, sixty hours after leaving London, so that Monday's 'Times,' posted in the early morning, reaches Portugalete on Wednesday afternoon. In Bilbao the delivery is nearly twelve hours earlier, but there is a delay in waiting for the Madrid mail and a great deal of time lost on the road out here.

The post messenger will not leave a newspaper without a receipt for it. At one time the papers were irregular, and a complaint was made at the office at Bilbao, which now requires the official here to return the cover of every newspaper with the signature of the receiver. It is not a bad way of insuring their safety, though rather a troublesome one; and it proves, as do several instances of a like nature which A. has told me, that redress may be obtained for grievances even in a country like Spain, if people know enough of the language and will take sufficient trouble to reach the right quarter with the complaint.

The post takes the same time to go to England, so that letters can be written and answered in five days.

SPANISH COINAGE.

Name of Coin.	Value in Reals.	Equivalent value in English Money.		
		£	s.	d.
GOLD.				
Onza	320	3	6	8
Media onza	160	1	13	4
Isabella	100	1	0	10
Cuarto de onza	80	0	16	8
Dos douros	40	0	8	4
Douro	20	0	4	2
SILVER.				
Douro	20	0	4	2
Escudo	10	0	2	1
Dos pesetas	8	0	1	8
Cuarto de douro	5	0	1	$0\frac{1}{2}$
Peseta	4	0	0	10
Media peseta	2		0	5
Real	1		0	$2\frac{1}{2}$
COPPER. *Old Coinage.*				
Dos cuartos	$\frac{8}{33}$		0	0·606
Un cuarto	$\frac{4}{33}$		0	0·303
Una ochava	$\frac{2}{33}$		0	0·152
Un maravedi	$\frac{1}{33}$		0	0·076
Isabella Coinage.				
Media real	$\frac{1}{2}$		0	$1\frac{1}{4}$
Cuarto de real	$\frac{1}{4}$		0	$\frac{5}{8}$
Decimal Coinage.				
Diez gramos	$\frac{2}{5}$		0	1
Cinco gramos	$\frac{1}{5}$		0	$\frac{1}{2}$
Dos gramos	$\frac{2}{25}$		0	$\frac{1}{5}$
Un gramo	$\frac{1}{25}$		0	$\frac{1}{10}$

CHAPTER IV.

JOURNAL.

EXCURSIONS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Portugalete: October 27.

THE weather seems to be improving; to-day has the warmth of summer nearly, and the colouring on the mountains has had the hot glow which we do not get even in summer in England.

We had quite an assemblage this morning for English service; and now that there is a prospect of two or three families co-operating, I think there is some hope of obtaining the services of an English chaplain, which my people here will immensely rejoice at. The constantly increasing works at mines

and railways, all of which bring a certain amount of English of different classes, make it a matter of necessity to do something for them in this way; and as nearly all these undertakings are promoted by the English, they should certainly make it a part of their business to secure to the people they entice here some observance of the religion they have been brought up in at home.

Some years ago the laws of the country, and even the prejudices of the people, would have made such a thing impossible; and even now I hear that in this northern district, where priestcraft still rules, there would be some difficulty in hiring a room for a Protestant service, and that in all probability it would be necessary for the English to build something for themselves, and, as this will need some outlay, I fear the accomplishment of the good work may be yet a little distant; but it is encouraging to hear it talked of by people really anxious to carry it out.

October 28.

Another bright warm morning has caused us to carry out our plan of spending a day in Bilbao. The roads are still so heavy from the long continued rains that a light load was deemed advisable for the carriage, and as I was anxious to see the river scenery I chose that route, and started with P. by the eight o'clock steamboat. It is a convenient institution, going many times a day in summer, in winter only twice. It has just changed its first hour from 7.30 to 8 o'clock, and that seemed early enough; but the sun was bright, and we soon felt warm, as, after hurrying down the dirty steps at the end of the esplanade, and along the still dirtier narrow quay, we reached the little river boat, and immediately steamed out into the middle of the stream, where, caught by the tide, the narrow, shallow craft tosses about for a few minutes not altogether pleasantly; but soon she has her

head up stream, and the tide is with her, so we get along gaily.

For some distance in the first part of the river there is a substantial dividing wall, ending in a tower, which narrows and deepens the stream, and prevents the fall of mud and sand from the steep right-hand bank from filling up its course.

As we steam along under this straight wall there is not much to look at, so I will study my fellow passengers in the long, narrow deck-cabin, with seats like an omnibus. Of course there is a priest, very fat, very sleek, and very oily in man and manner; but I see a tendency to a scowl at times which makes me doubt if he always is as benign as on this occasion. I need not describe his dress; his long black cassock is somewhat rusty, and his hat, like those I have noticed here on other priests, is rather extra large and shady. A pleasant-looking black-eyed lady holds animated conversation with him; the fingers are as expressive as the eyes,

and all seem to talk as fast as the tongue, which slips and clips its words so that I can hardly catch one of them. There is also a graver-looking and older lady with a nice handsome face, almost English. She has her young servant with her, carrying a basket, and the few words she says seem to refer to the marketing which she is proposing.

Both ladies wear silk mantillas. I hardly know why one is not more struck by them as a novelty. In the days of bonnets, perhaps, one should have been; but the edifices now worn, which do not deserve the name, are not widely different from the raised hair and comb of the Spanish lady; and where the mantilla is of lace or gauze it is not much more of a drapery than the 'brides' and 'voile' which complete the outdoor coiffure of an English lady. Very young girls wear hats in Spain as in other countries; the mantilla belongs to the come-out young lady. There does not seem to be much protection against cold and wet in a

Spanish lady's dress; though the climate is often neither dry nor warm, there certainly is no admission of the fact in the arrangements either indoors or out, as far as I can see. I do not suppose a Spanish lady ventures out in really bad weather.

The Spanish gentleman is well protected by the enormous 'capo' with which he almost covers his face, as well as the rest of his person; but even with this protection his appointments and engagements are made very much to depend upon 'bueno tiempo.' A Spanish teacher from Bilbao, who has been in the habit of coming to teach my people at Portugalete, always failed them when there was any sign of storm or rain, and his irregularity from this cause made them give up the lessons.

I have examined my companions in the cabin, and we have reached the end of the river wall, so I will see what I can find on the outside of the boat in people and things to

look at. The deck is crowded by passengers and by baskets; several of these belong to women from Portugalete, whom the inhabitants employ as messengers to procure the necessaries of life from the better market and shops of Bilbao. I have heard a great deal about the messenger, or 'correa,' ever since I came, for she is constantly in request in R.'s establishment; and the one she employs is a marvel of marketing skill, seldom omitting anything out of the long and heterogeneous lists of her different employers, and carrying in her head an amount of money calculations that would puzzle the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

She is on the boat now; a thin, keen-looking, black-eyed woman, painfully on the alert and intelligent looking. There is one of the same calling by her side, much stouter and much more serene, but I think I should have more confidence in the quick wits of the thin 'correa;' at any rate, I would trust her to make

a better bargain for me. The baskets, empty, are almost a load; what will they be when they are filled? The elder women of the working class wear a handkerchief, black, or coloured, tightly arranged as a head covering; there is little other peculiarity in their dress beyond a similar handkerchief pinned over the shoulders, and which, on high days and holidays, is of gay colour and silk material.

But I must look at the banks of the river, and P., who has made the expedition before, can tell me something about them. The first point of any interest is the village of 'El Desierto,' on the right side. I suppose it formerly deserved its name more entirely than it does at present, but it is not even now an attractive locality; for it is the site of large iron smelting works, with their usual accompaniment of tall smoky chimneys. I am told they belong to Spaniards of the name of Ybarra, who have been growing very wealthy through their mines and ironworks, and their

ships, with a large letter Y on the flag, are well known in Spanish and British waters.

At some distance higher up the river, on the same side, we come upon banks of iron ore ready to be shipped to England and other places, and vessels are busy loading at some of them. The baskets of ore are carried by women and girls from the heaps to the ships, and everything has a ferruginous aspect. One of the long piles of precious material I look at with special interest; it is from the mine under A.'s management. It is skilfully packed with the aid of stout wooden planks and supports, and so close to the water that it almost overhangs the ships, and a projecting stage from which the ore is poured into the hold of the vessel makes loading quick and easy.

The Spaniards do not look pleasantly on these stores of English wealth; one hears 'Inglese' in the middle of sentences which do not sound complimentary. I hear that they are always promising themselves the pleasure

of seeing this pile roll into the river, and look out for the catastrophe, day after day, from the steamboat, with interested expectation; but it is too well constructed to give them this gratification.

Having passed this point, which is called Zorrosa, we come to the busy inhabited district of Olaveaga, the shipping port of Bilbao, beyond which no large vessels can navigate in any state of the tide. The river here is thronged now by ships of all nations; the largest seem to be steamers, but they are all here on the same errand. The cargoes they bring are various; coals from England, cod, or 'baccalau,' from Newfoundland, timber from Norway; but they all carry back the same burden—iron, iron, iron.

Olaveaga is a busy and pleasant-looking place in the morning sun. After passing it, we come to the dark lines of cypresses in the English cemetery, near to which, on a steep hill above the river, stands a large building, which

in England I should have said must certainly be a workhouse; to my surprise I find that it is nothing else than a 'House of Charity' here, but as the institution is spoken of with praise and gratitude to the 'Señor Muricta,' who, with two other Spaniards, set it on foot, we will hope that there is more real charity and kindliness in its arrangements than is found in such institutions in England.

We were fortunate in finding water enough in the river to carry us quite up to Bilbao; in some states of the tide passengers are turned out near Olaveaga, and rattled along in two or three excruciating omnibuses into the town. We landed comfortably at the quay in Bilbao, and walked across the pleasant-looking public garden till we reached a long, rather narrow, but well kept street, which conducted us to the Numero 1 Secunda dra (or to the right) of the Calle de la Libertad, to which I have addressed so many letters. I made a sort of acquaintance with it on the day of our arrival,

but now I see everything from a different standpoint, and can take in something more than a general impression.

I have leisure to notice the industrious individual, who has his station at the bottom of the wide staircase, making plaits of Espartero grass, which he joins together, edges uppermost, in the shape of mats or soles to sandals: and whilst looking out for the arrival of the carriage detachment, I watched the boys, who had turned out of the large college opposite for their hour of amusement. They had very much the ways of 'playful children just let loose from school' in England; but one game, which seemed a favourite, was certainly quite Spanish, and very amusing to a stranger. It was a mimic bull-fight.

One big strong boy, slightly disguised with the coat of a fellow over his head, performed bull. There were matadors on foot and matadors mounted; these last, small boys on the backs of bigger ones, and armed with

sticks, careered around the formidable animal, who, no doubt, was imitating the behaviour of a poor tormented bull under like circumstances, dashing at his assailants with his head, and often knocking them over, horse and man, with more reality than could have been pleasant. Some of the horses were considered done for, but in the end the supposed bull succumbed in proper form, and after simulating death by a few seconds of quiet was dragged off by his companions. There were several repetitions of the performance, but my share in the sport was interrupted by the arrival of the carriage, and very soon we all sallied forth to the market.

There is not much difference in the market days, except that Sunday is the best; but this was a good one, and the large space devoted to the purpose was crowded with merchandise of varied sorts. We began with the least interesting articles of fish and meat, which occupy the farthest side of the

square, and are to some extent partitioned off, so as not to intrude upon the pleasanter sight of fruit and vegetables. Fish is in small quantity generally, and earlier purchasers to-day have carried off almost everything but eels.

There is some anxiety in the selection of the joints of mutton and lamb, for it is well known that as much goat and kid is sold in the market as these superior meats; but they also go by the same name, and housewives are not agreed as to the best point of detection; some say it is in the foot, some in the colour, some in the feeling of the rind or skin. R. made some feeble investigations of all, but there was no confidence in her own science in the matter, and if we have not carried off a quarter of a mountain goat, in place of our hoped for mutton, I am afraid it is not due to any cleverness on our side; we think, however, we shall be very sure when it is cooked, and then what

can we do? Well, not trust the plausible, pleasant-faced market-woman any more; but no doubt her neighbour will treat us just in the same way. We give our 'correa' from Portugalete credit for always knowing one from the other, but we fancy it sometimes suits her purpose to deceive us.

We turn with pleasure from the meat stall to the more agreeable ones covered with vegetables and fruit; there are tempting-looking grapes on almost all of them. I volunteer to try my skill at bargaining for delicious muscatels; whilst R. has still some more solid purchases to make, and P. declares himself equal to eggs. A. undertakes the game, that is his speciality, and there is a good choice —partridges, hares, and one or two woodcocks. R. begs that no live stock may be brought her; there is always more live than dead poultry in the market, and even a hare may be seen sitting under a basket, and so used

to his journeys to Bilbao that he takes his situation quite calmly, and we feel inclined to buy him to make a pet of.

A few evenings ago, when we were expecting the 'correa' to bring home a duck ready for the table, we heard a tremendous quacking on the stairs, and found seated in a basket such a lovely 'lily-white duck' that he, too, was very nearly added to the pets of the establishment. The marketings are pretty well accomplished at last, and a girl who has accompanied us from the town follows with a huge basket, and carries them off to Numero 1. We too adjourn there for our 12 o'clock déjeûner, which is very welcome by this time. A kind, pleasant-looking, elderly Spanish gentleman makes us a visit the while; he wishes to pay his respects to the mother of 'Madame.' I am glad to find he speaks French easily, and that I can understand the numerous politenesses which, in a Spaniard, are a matter

of course; but I am told that he is quite as kind as are his speeches, and I am sure he looks it.

We have plenty to do as soon as we have finished our déjeûner, and once more start off for further marketings, but this time in the shops. The grocer is close at hand where R. buys sugar, ready cut in small squares: it is of fine quality, and melts quickly in the hot coffee; next come raisins, they are for puddings, but nothing more common than the bunches of fine Malaga raisins can be had for any purpose, but they are not dear. I suggest currants, but R. says they are quite out of the question, none are ever imported. Candles are wanted, they are English, of a common description, and dear of course; macaroni is a manufacture of the neighbourhood.

To my surprise I see R. produce sundry white linen bags of different sizes, and hand them to the man across the counter, and then learn that a Bilbao tradesman does not consider

it part of his business to supply paper to wrap up a parcel; he may, perhaps, vouchsafe a dirty-looking bag made out of an old newspaper, but R. prefers her own clean washed ones, and I think most people would agree with her. I hear of arobas and other weights and measures quite unfamiliar to me, and I feel that shopping in Bilbao is in all ways a mystery beyond me at present, but I like to look on.

We then make our way to the confectioner's, and buy delicious-looking 'bollos,' a kind of long bun which Spaniards eat with chocolate, and some green dried figs equally good. The woman in the shop is encouraging, and I venture on trying to enquire the history of the miserable half-blind look of two little children in close linen caps. She says they suffer from ophthalmia, and that one of them is nearly blind; but both have bad colds, and are worse than usual. I learn afterwards that this sad complaint is a very common one in

Bilbao, and blindness frequently the result; in fact, that from some cause every kind of infantine suffering is prevalent, and the mortality of young children terribly great in the town.

Our next visit is to a glove shop; it has greater pretension than any shop I have seen, and is very spacious and well set out with small articles, such as scarfs, laces, veils, fans, &c., the gloves being the least attractive part of the display, but they were in large quantity, nevertheless; and when I stated my need of some, I was invited by the lady of the establishment to rest my elbow on a cushion, and a likely pair being selected, she proceeded by slow degrees to work them on my hand with a bestowal of time and patience worthy of a better occasion; but which she beguiled to herself by animated conversation with the next customer, who was waiting her turn for similar attentions. The gloves were good and cheap, not more than 1*s.* 10*d.* the pair. I

asked where they were manufactured, and was answered 'on the premises;' and, looking through an open door-way, I could see the manufacturers at work.

We visited afterwards two or three drapers' shops, which had not an imposing appearance, but were well filled by useful and, in some cases, nice-looking articles; and last of all I was introduced to an emporium of wonderful capacity, kept by a German, and where, to my great relief, I found I was understood when speaking a language I was somewhat accustomed to. 'Johann's' vast premises must be something of the nature of an American store. It would be difficult to name any article for household use that they do not contain; and his enterprising adventure, begun not a great many years ago, seems to draw as many Spanish as foreign customers. The best manufacturer of wooden furniture is a Spaniard, and some very charming things he has made for A.'s house, copied from Heal's pattern book. I think I

have said enough about the shops. and must leave this feminine topic, though I doubt if there is any matter of much greater interest to be found in Bilbao.

It has no remarkable public buildings; the churches are not striking; the modern bridges are suspension ones, but there is one very curious and steep stone bridge which must have been built before wheels were much used in the town. The houses are all more uniformly good than in most towns; I believe there is a dirty, squalid part on the other side of the steep bridge, but the parts we have to do with are well built and thriving looking. Water is abundant everywhere; and is abundantly used for cleansing purposes.

Spanish ladies always wear their dresses slightly trailing on the ground, and never raise them, but the streets of Bilbao are so frequently washed that one is less disgusted by the practice than one would be in many places. The water carrying of the town is a heavy labour,

and is commonly performed by women; 'Aguaderas' they are called, and wonderful are the loads they carry on their heads to the tops of high houses, often in copper vessels, brilliantly polished, called 'calderas,' and most effective when the sun shines on them.

We have ended our day in Bilbao, and must hasten to catch the four o'clock boat. A. and R. found the road in such bad travelling order that they sent their carriage home with the purchases, and came with us by water. What a loaded boat it was, but more with packages than people; and how the 'correas' chattered and compared notes; and how, on reaching Portugalete, we were jostled and hustled nearly into the river by the eager claimants for porter's service, and the reals that follow it. But we had, happily, nothing for them to transport.

Portugalete: October 30.

A bright day and promise of a warm one lead us into plans that only belong to summer

in England. Our neighbours on our lower floor proposed to us a picnic. There were some difficulties in the way of carrying it out, for when they came to investigate resources, they found their own wholly inadequate to the occasion; but they were not easily daunted by such trifling considerations, and it was decided that one of their party should proceed by early boat to Bilbao and join the rest with the wherewithal at the place of rendezvous.

It was not to be a glen, or a lake, or a waterfall; we are already so infected with the iron fever of the country that we chose the terminus of the wire tramway, which we were curious to see. The way to it over the hills behind Portugalete was only a moderate walk, and our neighbours, with their relations from the house below, took that route. A., R., P., and myself went by the very circuitous driving road, but we could not have too long a drive on such a lovely morning, and I was longing to explore that straight road through the poplars

and round the hill which I could see from my bedroom window.

On reaching the other side of the hill we look into quite a new country and very beautiful. The scenery near to us is a little more wooded and verdant than what we generally meet with here, but the distant view is still more fascinating. The three sugarloaf-shaped mountains, one of which comes so constantly into our views, assume different shapes as we draw nearer to them, and the Somorrostro range in the distance makes the strangest unthought-of lines against the deep blue sky. When I hear that these rocks are walls of veritable iron I am not surprised, for they must be made of something different from any rocks I have seen before. As we get farther into the Somorrostro district I am shown walls, sheds, houses, built of the stone of the country, but which is nothing else than iron ore. The very roads are mended with it, and although they cut into fearful ruts in wet weather through some peculiarity in this

material, yet in moderately dry weather they roll down into a condition like asphalte pavement, and are delightful to travel on. In a long dry season, however, they are as hard as iron itself and very trying to horses.

I was never weary of taking in all the new things on this pleasant drive; the weather was quite July-like, and it was most interesting to see the signs of the different schemes for opening out the country's wealth; which, even to an unknowing observer like myself, seems absolutely infinite. We overlook several miles of the Galdames railway at one point, and at the same time get a good view of the enormous wooden erections, at about 200 yards distance from each other, which are intended to carry the rope of the wire tramway. I see some abandoned workings at one spot on a steep hill, and suggest that the ore must have been disappointing in that instance, but am told that had nothing to do with the neglected steep incline with the rails partly torn up. It arose

from a mistake of the Spanish engineer, who, having sent to England for a drum to work the trucks on the incline, fixed it entirely wrong, and the whole thing having come to smash, and killed some one on the first trial, they have made no attempt to renew the work.

Having crossed the Galdames railway, and driven some distance along the farther side of the valley, we reach the spot which, from the number of workmen, and the extensive sheds, steam-engines, &c., we know to be the head-quarters of the wire tramway; so here we stop, and wait a short time before the welcome arrival in a carriage of the gentleman from Bilbao, which indicates that we are not going to starve on this festive occasion; and soon we see, making their way to us across country and over the railway banks, the pedestrians of the party.

We all feel very jolly at our successful meeting from such different points; but we feel very hungry too, and quickly begin to unpack

our baskets and spread out our provisions in a shed dignified by the name of 'office.' The ambassador to Bilbao had done wonders in a short time, and produced a choice of good food which, assisted by some English boiled beef from our establishment, made us a first-rate repast: at least we thought so, and were as cheerful a party as could be found anywhere, all the more that there were the unfailing spirits of some children to help us.

At the conclusion of this part of our entertainment we went to see the works of the tramway, still in an incomplete state, and a prodigious mass of heavy iron wanted for the machinery was at the very time being moved up the steep hill, inch by inch, by about thirty Spanish labourers. The mere hard work of this tramway seems to be done by Spaniards, but anything requiring mechanical skill is in the hands of English workmen, and I believe the overlooker is a Frenchman, who has been in various parts of the world engaged in the

same undertaking. I suppose there is an advantage in this mountainous country in a mode of transport which is not much affected by the undulations of terra firma, but the work is not advanced far enough here to make any trial of its merits, though success is spoken of elsewhere.

After our inspection of this work of art and 'man's device,' we turned to the beauties of Nature, and wandered down into the valley, and by a rippling hidden brook I saw for the first time the true maidenhair fern growing in luxuriant native beauty. There was nothing else unlike England in the spot, but this growth of a warmer climate at once reminded us of our southern locality.

On our way home we took a different route, and drove some miles along a dirty, difficult road in the direction of Bilbao. The district seemed to be devoted to market gardens, and I came to the conclusion that a large part of the vegetables supplied must come from this

region. As we neared Portugalete, we were annoyed by the drivers of two diligences, who tried with their slow conveyances to keep us behind them on the road, and when after some peril we had managed to pass them, they charged down upon us on a steep hill to regain their advantage. One of them was evidently an unpleasant customer, and raced us almost to Portugalete, calling out not pleasant things, but we reached home safely.

Portugalete: November 2.

Another beautiful day made us plan another expedition. This time it is to A.'s iron mine. A good part of the road there is already known to me, as it is for five or six miles the road to Bilbao, but at Zorrosa we turn to the right, and wind up the hill. A walker can cut off a mile or two, and P. gets out of the carriage and takes the shorter way over the springy, heathy turf. There are many sorts of Erica still in bloom; I wish I could bring them to England,

to adorn our rocks and banks in the cold season, for they evidently belong to the winter here, and some are just coming into bloom. The large Irish heath with its handsome purple bells is nearly out of flower.

As soon as we get to the top of the hill we have to go down again into the valley; it is pretty scenery, like North Wales; little streams ripple across the road, and as we get down into the valley it has a much more enclosed look than the scenery we were amongst last week. There is a beautiful clear blue river that ought to contain salmon, but in some places it is hidden by the banks and underwood. On the further side rises a high steep mountain, rather bare. I am told that the shrubs I see high up are probably Arbutus, and the creatures jumping about the rocks are not sheep but goats.

The scene becomes more and more lovely as we drive on, and after the last turn of the road we see an immense stretch of distance along a wide, beautiful valley, with a road marked by

trees winding up its course, and which I hear leads to a place called Valmaseda, and still further on to Burgos. A pyramid-shaped and distant blue mountain is the last thing in the landscape; but to my great joy I find we are going to halt at the loveliest point of all, where a beautiful single-arch bridge crosses the dashing stream, and one or two picturesque cottages make a perfect foreground to the distant mountain scene. I have made a sketch to give some idea of its beauty, but no sketch can do it justice on a day like this.

This attractive spot is called Castrejana; there are a few cottages of unpretending appearance, which are the abodes and lodgings of some of the labourers at A.'s mine, about a mile off, up a steep rocky path. We are to make our way up to it, so leave carriage and horses at a stable in the little village. The road that we find so steep to walk up is, however, the usual track of the unceasing bullock carts, which bring the ore down from the mine.

Happily for the animals their loads are always coming down the hill. It would be impossible to get more than the empty cart up. The path up the mountain side is rather picturesque; the first part through trees, then we emerge upon the open rocky hill, and, after a short climb, are on a level with the workings, which a turn in the narrow road brings into view.

They have all the appearance of an ordinary stone quarry, with no more danger or hardship to the workmen, and one sees at a glance the advantage, on every ground, of such an unusual disposition of the valuable metal; it is, however, I believe, the common case in this country. There is a large crowd of men employed here in various ways, boring, carrying, carting, and road-making, but now comes the dinner hour, and work ceases, and files of women, with large brown dishes on their heads come toiling up, with the mid-day meal of husbands and *lodgers*, for at the present time every house-

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hold is increased by additional inmates, drawn by the abundant and well-paid work.

After dinner comes pay time, for it is the day of the fortnightly pay, and so we have the opportunity of seeing all the workers as they come in turn to the window of the office and receive their money, already counted out for them by A.'s care at home, and carried up in little bags for each, of R.'s making. The business is soon accomplished in this way, but it was a long evening's work yesterday, which now saves time to A. and everyone else.

Some of the men are fine, powerful-looking fellows; all wear a long scarf wound round their waists, one end of which, joined as a pouch, is tucked into the roll of the scarf, and carries safely the valued gains. The red or blue cap, or 'Boina,' is almost as universal as the scarf, and very common is the thick hand-knitted jersey, most frequently in blue and red, a capital article for a working man, warm, light, and durable. The trousers are generally short, and

CARTING IRON ORE DOWN FROM THE MINE

the stockings long, and very frequent are the uncomfortable looking sandals tied over the burly knitted stockings with odds and ends of tape and string. A strange fancy, as a matter of ornament, are the strips of coloured cloth sewn in squares like patches on new articles, but I fancy the Castilians adopt this more than the Biscayans.

After an hour or two at the mine, when we had just heard one of the periodical explosions from many blast holes, which break up the large masses of rock, we crossed the stream and scrambled down into the valley by the other bank, gathering lovely ferns by the way. Our drive home I need not describe, and here is a sketch close to the Mine.

Portugalete: November 12.

The weather here has changed terribly for the worse. I fear it is a break up for the season. Sunday was rather wet and stormy, and the

night still more so; but yesterday morning began pretty fine.

During the day, however, we had some storms; and about 4.30 o'clock I was watching the progress of one from the window, which was very remarkable, in the direction of the sea; and I had just advised R. to shut the window in her little boudoir, when there came such a flash of lightning and simultaneous peal of thunder as I never experienced, and with it hail and wind that threatened for five minutes to break in every window in the house, and burst open R.'s window, which she had imperfectly closed in her haste, bringing a little heap of hail-stones into the room. In a second the glass door of the drawing-room was burst from its bolt, leaving it in the floor, and some of the glass was broken; but in a few minutes all was serene again. There are several panes of glass cracked by the hail, but people are too wise here to have any windows facing the sea; so they do not get a direct gale, and

the walls are quite two-and-a-half feet thick on the sea side.

When our own perils were over, we began to think of A. and P. on the road from Bilbao in the open carriage. In less than ten minutes they arrived, not drenched, as they wore mackintoshes, but beaten by the hail on their hands and faces till they were quite bruised; and they say the lightning seemed to strike the ground two yards in front of the horses, which stood stock still for a second, and then bolted for a short distance; but they reached home safely, and we are all very thankful, as we hear this morning that the church of Portugalete, close to which they were, was struck by the lightning, and the tower considerably damaged. The school house adjoining is also much the worse.

November 22.

A few mornings ago Francesco came to tell us that a large English steamboat was anchored in the bay very near to the mouth of the river,

and mounting up to the mirador we discovered one of large size and unusual build. She had an official appearance, and some of our party thought it was a ship of war; but we soon learnt that it was a vessel conveying a telegraph cable to be laid down close to the mouth of this river, and then carried on to Bilbao. I believe the starting point in England is the Lizard.

We feel great interest in its mission; but the work has not proceeded very quickly, for, after laying some lengths of the cable, the wind became too rough for her to venture so close in shore, and she steamed away again out of sight. Yesterday and to-day she has been renewing her work in calmer weather. The water has been studded with little boats, very busy about something or another, and the steam tugs have been going to and fro. To-day the cable has evidently been landed about three-quarters of a mile from the mouth of the river, and fifty, or perhaps a hundred, labourers are busy digging

the deep trench along the shore in which it is to be buried.

As I look through a telescope from time to time I see, immovably standing by, peering at the work, three or four black-robed priests, like ravens, or similar birds of ill-omen, and we all remarked, that if the Carlists wanted the cable cut, these priests would very well know how to do it for them. I hear it is expected to be ready for use by January 1, and I only hope nothing may happen to prevent this quick and certain method of communication with England.

November 29.

We have had occasion to drive into Bilbao to-day, and whilst waiting for A. at Numero 1, we heard sounds of martial music, and some companies of soldiers passed down the street. Soon Señora Iturrizaga came to us with the information that there was a Republican rising in sympathy with the movement

at Malaga and other places in the south, and that two or three hundred Reds of the district had left Bilbao early that morning to join the cause, and that troops were going to follow by the next train to look for them and bring them back.

We went down to the railway station, which we found filled with some hundreds of these soldiers in marching order. They were of all sorts, sizes, and ages. Two or three hundred promising-looking men might have been picked out of them; but as a whole we did not think much of them, and were disposed to agree with the rather contemptuous terms in which the Señora had spoken of them. But she, by-the-bye, is a Carlist, and it was her letter to one of the chiefs which A. had about him that carried him through the Carlist lines last spring, and I imagine the sentiment is a very prevailing one amongst the feminine part of the population, who are exceedingly devout, and influenced entirely by the priests; and no

doubt a great deal of the agency in favour of the Carlist cause, which these clericals are said to be continually carrying on, is through their means. The power of the priests may be judged of by their being able almost to put a veto on balls and similar amusements.

My people have once or twice intended to go to the so-called public balls at Bilbao, but everything connected with them was kept so private, lest the priests should hear of them, that they missed their opportunities.

I believe the men are rather careful of declaring themselves, when talking with foreigners in the matter of politics. Of course the officials and all in authority outwardly stand by the powers that be, and the rest, being more bent on material prosperity than on any particular king or government, are not in favour of a disturbance of the present peace. There is a great idea that it will come nevertheless, and the peasant class of the Basque provinces, with the same unenlightened bigotry

that influences the women of a higher class, would again rise to the call of a Carlist leader, as they were ready enough to do last spring in many cases, in spite of the loss of work and wages it entailed.

A. however lost few of his workpeople at that time; one or two were pressed into the service, but there seemed an unwillingness on the part of the leaders to interfere with the English companies, and at the time when their soldiers were making booty of everything that came within reach, he with his servant carried heavy bags of money to pay their workpeople past the Carlist outposts at Castrejana without molestation.

CHAPTER V.

A. AND R.'S LETTERS.

'The Carlists are coming.'

January 10, 1873.

I DO not know what you may have heard about us in the papers, for the 'Times' says little or nothing; but quite true it is that the Carlists are about again on all sides of us, and are doing a great deal of mischief. In consequence the posts are again most uncertain, so you must not be uneasy if you do not receive letters.

Mr. J. O. left Portugalete on Sunday morning, and after making three hours of the railway journey from Bilbao to Miranda, the train had to come back again, as the line was cut. On Tuesday night he started by diligence

to Zumarraga, but as no posts arrived on Wednesday morning, and we learned that the diligence from Zumarraga had been stopped by the Carlists and all the letters burnt, we are doubtful whether he was able to get on.

It is said there is a large number of them about Galdames, where the new railway is, and the manager at the Regato mines came across a band of them there the day before yesterday.

In the midst of these unpromising circumstances we hear that a chaplain now at Barcelona has been appointed to Bilbao by the Bishop of Gibraltar. I am afraid, now that other difficulties have been removed, the state of the country will prevent such a peaceful object being carried out.

The weather has been very stormy lately, and there have been many shipping casualties in sight of this place. There are two ships lying aground now on the opposite shore, one on the rocks at the end of the pier and the other opposite the hotel. They say there is not the least

chance of saving them. At low water they can reach them with boats, and I believe they brought the people safe off yesterday. The ships ran aground on Tuesday evening, and we thought they would be broken to pieces then and there before they could get the people off.

We were in a great state of excitement about it, and at nine o'clock, when we went down to the pier again, they had done nothing, and did not seem inclined to do anything. At last we got hold of the captain of the port, who said he would send out two boats at three o'clock, when the tide would have gone down; but we were afraid that by that time everyone on board would be drowned; and as the vessels were English we tried to telegraph to our Consul, but we found that the Carlists had again cut the wires.

February 5.

We hear a great deal of the Carlists; five hundred under Santa Cruz have possession of the line between Vittoria and St. Sebastian, and

will let no train pass. A few passengers go as far as Vittoria, and then run the risk of driving from there to St. Sebastian. Our visitors and the H.'s talk of taking a tug boat from here to Bayonne, but as the owners propose the exorbitant charge of 90*l.*, it is not very likely that they will adopt that method, though they are all most desirous to get away now.

The Carlists cut down nineteen telegraph posts between Zorrosa and Bilbao, and sixty-nine between this place and Santander. We drove to Bilbao the morning after it had been done, when the wires and posts were lying all about the road. They will not allow any diligence or carriage to go through Durango, which is the only driving route to the French border; so now that they have possession of the railway we are being pretty completely hemmed in here. There still seems to be a great deal of honour amongst the chiefs, and any unnecessary rough practices are probably not with their sanction.

General Moriones has offered 10,000 pesetas for Santa Cruz's head, and he returns the compliment by offering three pesetas for Moriones'. A battle is reported to have just taken place, in which forty Carlists were killed, three curés amongst them. All the custom-house officers are gone from here to fight, so we should have a fine chance of bringing in things free of duty. There were a good many flags displayed on the public buildings last week in honour of the birth of the infant prince; but the Carlists are certainly growing more bold.

The head of the party in this district was a chief in the old war; he is advanced in years, but has still a dangerous amount of vigour left in him. His name is Andechaga, but he is commonly called Don Castor. He has taken up his abode in the English-looking residence near to Zorrosa, where the adherents of the cause rally round him. It is curious how little attempt is made at any concealment at the present time. I suppose it is a proof of the

strength of the party. The other day the gentleman who is engineer to the wire tramway communicated to a friend who was going to see some Carlist chiefs at dinner that he was anxious about the preservation of his works, and he received in reply an assurance that they would not be injured.

Bilbao: February 26.

The last letter I received from home was on the 21st; since then no post has arrived. On Saturday the Carlists blew up three of the bridges on the railway, so there is no hope of any more traffic on the line for some time to come. They are taking possession of horses in all directions. Ours are safe so far, but they took our butcher's horse at Portugalete, and last week an Englishman here had one taken; he had four in his stable, and they had them all out and chose the one they liked best.

There has been very little apparent sensation produced by the abdication of the King, or

the declaration of the Republic, and it is very difficult to know what the people here really think about it all. I fancy, however, they are beginning to appreciate King Amadeo more than they did; at any rate some of them do, and at least give him credit for disinterestedness, but they would never have forgiven him for being a foreigner.

The carnival season has produced the same amount of festivity as in peaceful times; numbers of people have been walking about the streets in grotesque dresses, but there did not seem much sense or meaning in them. Three different sets of about forty each were dressed in blue, with blue masks, and they had very good and original bands of guitars and tambourines.

We came to Bilbao on Saturday and slept at the Antonia hotel, in order to attend the children's masquerade ball. We went to it at eight o'clock. The sight was exceedingly pretty; only the children in costumes danced,

and there were about fifty of them; the eldest could not have been more than eleven, and the youngest was about three. The dresses of the rest of the company were very plain. Most of the children danced wonderfully well; the best dressed were a little boy and girl as Faust and Marguerite. Two small boys were supposed to be English tourists, and were dressed in black, with high white hats, and long whiskers. They had large walking sticks and travelling bags across their shoulders, and between the dances they pulled out newspapers, and walked up and down, arm-in-arm, reading them. The grown-up people all danced after the children were gone, and R. learned to dance the polka in proper Spanish style.

Portugalete: March 1.

The 'Olaveaga,' steamship, is going out to-morrow, and will take some letters. I sent some by the 'Mauritius,' and by the 'Lumley;' I wonder whether they reached. The post still

goes and comes some days, but I do not care to send more letters than I can help by it, as they are sometimes destroyed, and are often a fortnight on the road.

We were quite disappointed at not seeing any Carlists on Wednesday, after taking the trouble to empty our pockets before we left Bilbao. But they really are getting beyond a joke. Their last proceeding was to levy a tax of 800*l.* on the Somorrostro mines, and they say if it is not paid by a certain day they will destroy the railway. To-day the managers had a meeting, and settled to establish a force of two hundred men to protect the mines and the railway.

For the first time A. is afraid to go up to the mine and pay the men, so they are to come down to him at Zorrosa. Mr. W. was going up to pay at Mr. R.'s mine to-day, but word was sent to him that the Carlists meant to get possession of the money, so the men came to him at Olaveaga. On Wednesday about a

hundred marched up to A.'s mine, but the only thing they carried off was the cornet they blow when they are going to blast. They levy taxes on all kinds of people; a baker at Orduña was ordered to send a watch to one of the chiefs (Bernardo) as his quarter's tax. They carried off the Mayoress of Orduña, and several children, but they soon let them go again.

March 10.

Both the North Railway and the Bilbao branch having stopped working, we are at present without means of communication by land with any place. Moreover, the ordinary telegraph is cut in all directions, and the new cable is out of order, and will not be ready for use before the end of this week. No ship has gone out for the last ten days: firstly owing to the bad weather, and lately to the want of water. However, the spring tides are now coming on, and if the weather is fine there will be a perfect rush of steamers towards the

middle or end of the week; there are to-day no less than fifty-five steamers and seventy-five sailing vessels in the river.

We are, of course, surrounded by Carlists, but though they are helping themselves to other people's horses and money, they say they have orders not to interfere with the English. Of what is going on in other parts of Spain you probably know more than we do, as we get little or no news. The only certain fact seems to be that the troops are not inclined to fight, and in some places have refused to march against the Carlists; at the same time they are not Carlists themselves, but more inclined to be Alfonsists.

I suppose another week or two will settle something, and I should not be surprised to see the Carlists in power in the northern provinces, and a struggle between Alfonsists and Republicans in other parts. If a Federal Republic is established the result will be general fighting, and the independence of the Basque Provinces.

If Serrano were to be made Dictator we should have, I suppose, an Isabella or Alfonso restoration.

There is very little excitement in Bilbao. The Republic was formally proclaimed yesterday in the presence of 3,500 troops, civil guards and volunteers, and all went off quietly. I have been applying to our Consul to-day about getting an English gunboat, and I think it probable he will ask for one to be sent. If I saw any cause for serious alarm we would take ship to England, or charter a tug amongst us for Bayonne, but at present there is no reason for taking such steps.

The Carlists are keeping themselves going by levying taxes on real property, and they are actually being paid everywhere but in the large towns. They had the impudence to send a circular to the Civil Governor of Bilbao, requiring payment of 46,000 reals within ten days under penalty of 3 per cent. per day. Their messenger who carried the demand was

handed over to the Military Governor, and we shall probably hear no more of him.

There have been a few skirmishes in this neighbourhood; but with the exception of that at Miravalles about a fortnight ago no regular engagement. Of course business is to a certain extent paralysed by such a succession of drawbacks as the country has had, but the value of land is not diminished by them. I have just bought two small pieces of land on the river, for which I had to pay, though acting under the powers I have from the concession for the railway, 1,360*l.* per acre. This will give you some idea of the price land has reached in eligible situations.

March 10.

The Captain of the 'Campanil' has told A. to-day that he did not think any large ships would get out for the next three weeks, the state of the bar is so bad; but there is some hope of the French gunboat 'Chamois' going

out to-morrow, and I hope we may be able to send our letters by that means.

Friday last being W.'s birthday all that party went for a picnic to the works, and hired an omnibus with a very nice horse and two mules to take them. Whilst they were at luncheon six Carlists came up and took the horse out of the stable. They did all in their power to induce them to give it up, but it was of no use; and though, with the assistance of his workpeople, Mr. H. could easily have overpowered them, he was afraid of attempting it.

On Saturday they were guarding the Burceña Bridge when A. passed over it on his way to Zorrosa, but they did not attempt to stop him. They have ordered Portugaleté to pay a fine of 12,000 reals, and the inhabitants are to have a meeting to-night to settle about it.

Friday.

Our neighbours made up their minds last night to start to-day either in the 'Campanil,'

straight for England, or the 'Maria,' by way of Bayonne. I am helping them to pack, but must give a few minutes to writing a letter to send by them. Whichever way they go, they will leave the river at four o'clock.

We had unexpected visitors last night; one gentleman from England on mining business, and also an Oxford undergraduate. His mother sent him to Pau for the benefit of his health, and thinking he should like to see Spain, and the Carlists, he tried to get to Bilbao, which he did, by seeing a great deal too much of both. Mr. H. found him in the Antonia hotel, unable to speak Spanish, and not knowing how to get out of the country, so he took compassion on him and brought him here, and he is to travel back with Mr. H.'s party. Three posts came in all together yesterday, the first for many days, and how these came we cannot imagine.

. . . After all the H.'s decide to go by land, having obtained a Carlist pass, and

hired a carriage to take them to the French frontier.

March 21.

I hope to find some means of sending this to-morrow or next day, but I have no faith in the post. I am afraid you are more anxious about us than we are, or have been about ourselves. You would be surprised to see how regularly everything still goes on, and although we are surrounded by Carlists on all sides, and the troops are either unable or unwilling to do anything, we have so far suffered no serious inconvenience, beyond the interruption of means of communication, and the rise in the price of everything, owing to the irregular supply and the impositions of the Carlists.

Up to the present the Carlists have made a point of not interfering with English property. On Monday they paid a visit to Portugalete and took four horses. I passed them on the road as I was driving; one of them tried to stop me, and said he must have the horses; but

the rest immediately told him to leave me alone and let me go on.

The same day they cut the railway which brings down the ore from the Somorrostro mines to the river, and traffic has not been resumed. Before doing this they gave the mine owners the option of paying an enormous sum as dues for the first quarter of the year, and continuing to pay so much a day in future—at the rate of 60,000*l.* a year. They have not interfered with the work of our mine, which is going on as usual.

The post is now sent every day in one of the tugs to Castro, from thence by road to Santander, and thence by train to Venta-de-Baños on the northern line, and what becomes of it then goodness knows. Our weather, though mild, has been most disagreeable, and we have had more rain this week than I have ever seen here. For three days we could not get out of the house in front, there being a

regular lake, at least twenty feet wide, between us and the opposite houses.

March 25.

As a steamer for La Rochelle starts to-morrow, I shall have a good chance of sending letters. The Carlists are now at Castrejana in great force. Yesterday we drove to Zorrosa. An hour before, five boys (a miner of ours being one) had been firing across the river at Olaveaga. Two hundred troops went after the five boys, but, of course, did not catch them.

The Somorrostro people are not sending any ore down, though their railway is mended again; but the Carlists require a certain amount paid on every ton sent down, and they say they will shoot any carter found carting ore there; but so far they have taken no notice of our mine. A. has loaded his first large steamer at his stage, and it is pronounced the best in the river. There are fresh difficulties about the concession for the quay.

March 30.

Letters all arrive pretty regularly now at the end of five days, but by a very circuitous route. Very few steamers are coming in, as there is so little ore for them to convey. A.'s mine, and Mr. R.'s, are still carting down to the river, but they are almost the only people who are going on with it. A. has been loading two hundred tons every day lately.

It is quite a chance whether we find any ship to bring us to England at Easter. We might get to France by sea; but a land journey is out of the question.

The last few days have really been quite hot, though we have had some rain every day. Thursday we went with the H. H.'s to Castro, and took our luncheon. It is such a lovely place, and the drive to it beautiful, all along the coast. The road is very steep and winding, and hard work for the mules to drag our heavy vehicle up some of the hills; the many peeps of the sea, and the lovely little bays, sheltered

by spurs of the mountains running out into the water, quite repay one however for the trouble of the ascent.

We obtained the first view of Castro from the top of the hill about two miles off. It was very fine. The old castle is splendidly situated at the extreme point of a promontory of rock jutting out into the sea, and forming a natural harbour. The castle is very old and picturesque, and close behind it is the church, of about the same date. Most of the houses in the town are built along the edge of the sea, and form with the promontory on which the castle stands a half circle, backed by lofty ranges of limestone hills.

Castro, though honoured by the name of town, is scarcely more than a fishing village. It used to be a favourite resort for bathing; but lately few people have visited it. It is not improbable that some day a harbour may be constructed there, in which case it would become an important port.

Two hundred Carlists have been using our mine lately as a retreat whilst watching for troops to pass along the road. The Bilbao volunteers are in the habit of coming to Las Arenas to drill. Last night they sent their dinner down to be ready for to-day, but find this morning that the Carlists have carried it off in the night. If we are able to get away to England, you will very probably hear nothing more of us till you see us, for we shall not be able to decide till the last moment.

CHAPTER VI.

A JOURNEY HOME, AND RETURN TO PORTUGALETE.

THE letters after the last date ceased for a time in consequence of A. and R. carrying out their purpose of a visit to England. Travelling by land being at this time next to impossible, they made the expedition by sea in the steamship 'Ybarra,' No. 2. She had planned to leave the river on Wednesday, April 10, and from that day till the 13th my people went on board daily about an hour before high tide, hoping for the welcome news that she was actually going to start; but owing to the difficulty in completing her cargo, through the interruption of the mineral railway by the Carlists, the captain deferred his departure to the latest possible moment, and when they really left on Saturday there was

only just sufficient water to allow of the vessel passing over the bar.

Their passage to England was rather rough, but on the whole pleasant, and very quick, as they landed in Cardiff on the morning of the 16th. The chief drawback to their comfort was in the food, which, being prepared in Spanish fashion, and never very palatable, wanted more appetite than landsmen usually enjoy in the first days of a sea voyage.

R. and A. remained in England till the beginning of May, and then made their return journey to Spain through France as far as Bordeaux, where a vessel going to Bilbao took them on board for Portugalete. The weather was rough, and the accommodation on board was of the worst description, the vessel being only intended for the transport of coal, and on this occasion, having no cargo and being but half full of water ballast, the rolling during the thirty-six hours' voyage was almost intolerable. A. and R. landed however safely at Portugalete on

May 7, and owing to the absence of the custom-house officers, who were doing duty against the Carlists, they were able to take their luggage on shore without the usual delay and trouble of the Bilbao custom house.

They returned to their usual life with very slight misgivings as to the state of the country, so far as their own position in it was concerned. The Carlist occupation had hitherto caused them no molestation and few serious inconveniences, and the closer investment of Bilbao and the neighbourhood was so gradually accomplished that it was scarcely perceived. After their return to Portugalete they continued to send re-assuring accounts of the district, and letters, though much delayed, generally reached their destination.

There was no great change in the state of affairs till about the middle of June, when the increasing high price of every article of consumption, especially of fuel, proved the increasing strength of the Carlists, who were more and

more effectually commanding the roads and preventing supplies from reaching the district. Nevertheless, with the river still open and ships of different countries still pursuing their trade in it, it was difficult to feel serious alarm.

During the latter part of June small bands of Carlists paid occasional visits to Portugalete, among other places, carrying off sometimes a few horses, and sometimes provisions, or requisitioning small sums of money. The season for bathing at Portugalete, and Las Arenas, on the opposite side of the river, generally commences with July, and every room in the place has its occupant, and the sands and river banks present a lively, pleasant scene. This year the usual health and pleasure seekers seemed reluctant to venture from under the protection of the larger towns; but at length a guard of 150 soldiers being supplied from Bilbao, and the new large hotel being partially opened, they began to feel a return of confidence, and by the middle of the month the place seemed

to assume something of its cheerful season aspect.

A. and R. would gladly have dispensed with the soldier visitors, who bought up the limited supplies of the little market and increased their housekeeping difficulties, and whose conduct in other ways did not inspire sufficient confidence to compensate for the inconvenience of their presence; in fact, their letters at this time said more against their defenders than against their expected assailants, who had not often disenchanted themselves by close proximity.

Towards the end of July, A. and R. were driving to Bilbao in the early morning, and on reaching Burceña, about three miles along the road, they found that the new bridge across the Salcedon, a tributary of the Nervion, had been partly destroyed by a trench cut across it, and by serious damage to the piers and centre arch from balls fired into them, so that none but foot passengers could venture over. They learned that the Carlists had been allowed to carry on

their work of destruction without molestation from 9 P.M. till 3 A.M., although Bilbao and its soldiers were only four miles distant. The bridge on the other side of the river at Luchana had been treated in a similar manner, but the damage was less serious.

Owing to the destruction of the Burceña bridge the carting of ore between the Somorrostro district and Zorrosa was entirely stopped, and shortly afterwards the mineral line worked by the 'Diputacion' was permanently interrupted, paralysing completely the iron trade of the neighbourhood, and causing heavy losses to owners of mines and ships. Some few who were fortunate enough to have a stock of ore on the banks of the river reaped a harvest from the rise of the price and the fall in the freights.

Ships, however, which had been chartered previous to this interruption in their trade, and some even without charters, continued to arrive, refusing to be warned by the consuls and others, who knew the state of affairs, and foresaw what

would happen. Many of these were detained from six weeks to two months in the river, and even then had to leave without cargo.

Towards the end of July an English and a French gunboat arrived and took up their station at Olaveaga, in case it should become necessary to provide means of escape for the subjects of either country. About the same time A. found it necessary to pay his men in Bilbao, as bands of Carlists were constantly appearing at Zorrosa and at Castrejana, and on one occasion they took away a revolver from A.'s English foreman, and made the men stop work for a time and pay a small sum of money for each man; but these lawless acts were not countenanced by the chiefs, and the perpetrators of them were generally punished.

Of course, during this time some efforts were made on the side of the defence. A considerable number of volunteers were raised and armed in Bilbao, and many of the merchants, clerks, and idle men joined the cause,

and by this means the garrison was raised to about 4,000 men. At the same time many of the better class of people, some influenced by sympathy with the Carlist cause, others by the view that 'discretion is the better part of valour,' left with their families and goods for Bayonne and Biarritz and other places on the French coast.

Up to the end of July, however, A. and R., with the rest of the world at Portugalete, took little heed of the slow and sure progress the Carlists were making, whilst apparently not more aggressive than for some time past. On August 1, however, the chief, Andechaga, with about 2,500 men, made an unexpected attack on Portugalete.

The following account of it, translated from the principal Bilbao paper, gives the Republican view of the affair. I insert it as a specimen of this description of Spanish literature, a strange mixture of facts with untruths and exaggerations and a vaunting of successes unachieved.

These notices of the 'Insurreccion Carlista' seem to be always the same ill-composed paragraphs, but one sometimes reads a leading article of much higher merit in the same paper, which gives some idea of how much rich verbiage Spanish eloquence can pour forth upon a poor cause, as seen in its highest degree in the speeches of Castelar:—

'Andechaga, with a force of about 1,260 Carlists, passed Thursday night in San Julian de Somorrostro, after the encounter with scarcely 200 of the garrison of Villegas, whom he could not succeed in beating. Yesterday the band of Carlists appeared on the heights between Portugalete and Santurce, at the same time that another party—probably that of Gorordo—had placed itself in ambuscade above Lamiaco.

'The Francos and Movilizados, who garrison Portugalete, in number about 150, put themselves under arms, and the gunboat "Buenaventura," although unable to see the enemy,

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discharged two shells, and a third in the direction of Lamiaco succeeded in dislodging the band from the latter place. The troops and the Carlists also exchanged a few shots, and at 10 A.M. it was supposed that the Carlists were retiring. However, they were only taking up fresh positions for the purpose of completely surrounding the town.

'Shortly afterwards firing commenced afresh between the advanced posts. The Francos particularly distinguished themselves by their bravery. Their commander Señor Velarino, with thirty men, impatient at being kept behind the barricade of the "Cristo," leapt over it, and attacked the Carlists, who, however, being concealed in considerable numbers, shot down ten of the Francos at the first discharge, not all dead, but as six of the bodies were afterwards found completely riddled with bayonet wounds, it is supposed that they were barbarously murdered by the Carlists afterwards —it is even said that a woman was treated in

the same way, but of this we are not certain. The remainder of this handful of heroes continued fighting, but as they were one against a hundred, they were obliged to retire.

'The Carlists, being covered by the town, were out of danger of the gunboat, which, notwithstanding, fired occasional shots in the direction indicated by the look-out man.

'By this time fifteen omnibuses had arrived at "Las Arenas," from Bilbao, with 250 of the Cazadores de Leorobe, accompanied by General Lagunero. These now crossed the river in boats, and the Carlists retired a little, but took up fresh positions close to Portugalete towards Sestao. Colonel Pino also arrived at Las Arenas with 400 men of the Immemorial Regiment, Civil Guards, and Carbineers, two mountain guns, and a squadron of cavalry.

'Most of the infantry passed the river, and by the time Andechaga was attacked it was almost evening. However, he was driven from one position after another for two hours towards

Galindo, the troops returning at 7 P.M. to Portugalete. The Francos and Movilizados reconnoitred as far as Santurce, but returned without any result.

'An old Carlist volunteer, now serving the Republic, behaved heroically, receiving three bayonet wounds. A Carlist mounted officer, dressed in black, was wounded or killed at the barricade del Cristo. A captain of Cazadores, and four or five privates were wounded during the firing in the evening, one of these while descending from an omnibus on the other side of the river.

'Some of the corpses of the Francos were discovered nearly naked, among them an officer who fell, wounded in the ankle, and must have been afterwards murdered. The total loss consists of ten dead, sixteen wounded, eight slightly wounded, and three missing. The troops, with the exception of a small reinforcement which remained in Portugalete, returned about midnight to Bilbao; some in steamers, some in

barges, with tugs, and others by land, the way being lighted by the burning houses in the direction of Galindo.

'We cannot understand Andechaga's motive in attacking Portugalete, and surely, seeing that he asserts that it is the defence of religion which has called him "to the mountains," he should have sent an intimation or notice of his intention, in order that the many people who are now there for bathing might have gone away. Fortunately none of these were injured. Even supposing he had succeeded in driving out the small garrison, what did he then propose? Nothing but to oblige the gunboat anchored in front of the town to bombard it, which would, by half-a-dozen discharges, have caused endless destruction.'

A. and R.'s report of the attack only concerned their own experience of it. The first serious alarm was caused by the firing of the gunboat close to them; and the quick discharges of musketry on land made them too

well aware that a real work of destruction was going on in their immediate neighbourhood.

There was a lull in the firing about eleven o'clock, and at this time the little river steamer left for Bilbao crowded with fugitives. A. having rather a large amount of money in the house, and thinking that if the Carlists succeeded in getting into the town, they would help themselves to anything of that kind, left at the same time to deposit his money in safety.

Just as the little boat left her moorings the firing recommenced, and one or two spent bullets dropped into the river close to the boat. The scene on board was indescribable. A perfect panic ensued. The women screamed and invoked the protection of Heaven; and men, women, and children threw themselves in a confused heap on the floor of the cabin, each struggling to secure a shelter under the seat, which was considered the place of greatest safety. The little boat meanwhile steamed on

towards Bilbao, and by degrees the panic-stricken passengers crawled out of their places of concealment, and as they became reassured by their increasing distance from the scene of danger, congratulated each other, and related in turn, or, more correctly speaking, all together, their various narrow escapes.

The fighting at Portugalete was, in the meanwhile, becoming more serious, and at the same time the contest was more equal, in consequence of the arrival of reinforcements to the troops from Bilbao. R. left her own house and went down to her friends on the quay as a less exposed situation. Even there the house was constantly struck by bullets, and it was with a sense of relief, and a feeling of thankfulness that the anxious party of English at last learnt that the Carlists had retired. By the time of A.'s return from Bilbao in the evening all was at an end, and no trace remained of the disturbance to the peace, but the flames rising from the different houses which

had been set on fire by the troops on the side of the hill in the direction of Santurce.

It was reported that the Carlists intended to renew the attack in the morning; and the colonel in command of the garrison declared his intention if they carried out their plan to burn to the ground every house in Portugalete. A. went to him to enquire whether English property would be respected, or time allowed for removing it; but he was informed that no difference would be made: all would be treated alike: and during the interview the colonel took the opportunity of showing, though more perhaps by manner than by words, his dislike of the English, and it was pretty evident that the prospect of sacrificing English property was by no means unpleasing to him.

His aide-de-camp had evidently been much hurt in his feelings by the fact of an Englishwoman having preferred to pay for his lodging elsewhere to receiving him into her house as

a 'billet,' and was even more bitter than his chief. 'What can you English expect,' he said, 'when you will not even receive a Spanish officer into your houses?' This dislike to the English, prevailing among the Republicans, was peculiarly marked at that time, and it was probably in part due to the fact that a general belief prevailed that the Carlists had received much aid both in money and arms from the English, and we were consequently, in some degree, held responsible for the misfortunes of the country.

The next few days were far from tranquil; a fresh attack of the Carlists was hourly expected, and preparations were made in the shape of barricades for their reception. It was with difficulty that permission could be obtained to enter or leave Portugalete. Provisions became absolutely scarce, and were fetched with much trouble from Bilbao. Milk, butter, eggs, were out of the question; and even the supply of fuel failed, and there was nothing to be had

but small quantities of charcoal at ruinous prices, and these with great difficulty.

Reinforcements of troops arrived, and were billeted in every house in the place. The little steamer reduced its frequent journeys to once or twice a day, and that not regularly, and all other methods of locomotion ceased entirely, so that communication, even with Bilbao, became uncertain.

Under these circumstances, there was a general *sauve qui peut*, and at last A. and R. determined to follow the example, and take passage in the ship 'Campanil' on the 9th August. However, at the last moment they altered their plan, through the offer of a very good house in Bilbao being made to them by a Spanish lady, who had gone to France; and as they were unwilling to leave their various interests, till it should become absolutely necessary, they accepted the offer, and under most trying circumstances of difficulty and delay, as well as of drenching rain, managed

to get away, with part of their belongings, in a large open boat.

The military authorities at first refused to let them remove anything, but at last an order from the Civil Governor of the province prevailed in their favour, and they were in hope of accomplishing the removal of everything they valued on a later occasion, which, however, never arrived; as on the next day the Carlists came down to the river at Zorrosa and other places, and made a practice of firing upon every ship or boat that went up or down.

The chiefs promised, and in good faith, that foreign craft should be exempted; but it seemed impossible to carry out effectually this undertaking, for in addition to accidental injury through getting sometimes into the line of fire, mistakes and complications arose as to the flag, and to add to the difficulty some Spanish ships began to fly English or French flags for the sake of their protection, and of course this

device exasperated the Carlists, and gave them some excuse for the different mischances.

Constant appeals were made to the leaders, who certainly did what they could to prevent interference with foreigners. All that the consuls could do was to send entreaties and representations to their different countries to prevent the sending of ships to Bilbao; but a few still continued to arrive, and some already in the river were unwilling to leave.

Things, however, grew worse and worse; the Carlists obtained entire possession of the left bank of the river, and various bands were scattered in all directions around the town. All communication by land was impossible, and an attack on Bilbao was daily and hourly expected. Preparations were made on all sides, barricades were thrown up, the existing fortifications repaired and put in order, new forts constructed and their guns mounted. Many of the foreigners left the town; every steamer out

had more than its full complement of passengers. The French Government provided a free passage on the gunboat to Bayonne for any French subjects not rich enough to pay their passage. English subjects were recommended to leave, and informed that those who remained would do so on their own responsibility. The excitement increased daily, firing was constantly heard along the river, for the Carlists daily increasing in numbers were perpetually taking aim at the ships or at the Republican guards stationed at Olaveaga or Luchana.

One day a louder report than usual aroused the fears of the Bilbainos; it turned out to be a ball fired from one of the forts at a body of Carlists on the opposite hill, which, being badly aimed, fell about a mile and a half short of its destination, and within 200 yards of the English Consul's house; another bang followed, with the same result. This sort of practice did not inspire much confidence in the besieged, nor dread in the besiegers. It was a

result of the disagreement between the artillery officers and the Government, and the consequent retirement of those most efficient.

All this time the expected attack never came, and day followed day in the same round of preparation, the same difficulty in getting provisions, the same stories of Carlist brutality and cowardice, and Republican heroism and bravery, and the almost incessant sound of distant firing. Every evening there was the announcement that *that* night the attack was really to take place; every morning the knowledge that nothing had occurred.

This state of things continued for nearly three weeks, when at last one day General Sanchez Bregua marched into the town quite unexpectedly with 10,000 troops. 'Now, at any rate, we are safe,' was the cry heard on all sides. 'Bilbao, the "Invicta," will still remain unconquered.' 'The Carlists will be dispersed, the river will be open again, trade will flourish,' &c. Such was the purport of the conversation

on all sides—in the club, among the troops, at the tables d'hôte, in the street.

The Spaniards, who a day or two ago had been in the lowest depths of despair, were now once more confident, and with their usual boasting propensity occupied themselves in describing to each other the utter defeat and destruction of the Carlists if they had ventured to attack the town. After some delay, and a great deal of marching and counter-marching, the troops were at last all billeted, and the excitement somewhat subsided.

At four o'clock on the following morning A. and R. were aroused by the sound of firing at no great distance, and on getting up and looking out, the melancholy sight of burning houses met their eyes, and flames could be seen rising up faintly in the early morning light, all along the side of the hills from Castrejana to Burceña. As the light increased they were able to distinguish, even without the aid of glasses, numerous detachments of Republican

troops in all directions, employed in the cruel, but so-called necessary, work of destruction. From time to time long lines of smoke, followed by the prolonged sound of volley firing, and occasionally by the louder boom of cannon, now from one side of the valley, now from the other, showed that they were not allowed to carry on their work without molestation, nor disposed to submit to the interruption without returning the fire. As the day went on, the firing increased; the troops concentrated their main body on a hill just above Olaveaga, whilst the Carlists occupied Castrejana, and flying detachments appeared first on one hill and then on another, firing a volley and disappearing.

It would naturally be supposed that the object of this sortie was to drive the Carlists from the left bank of the river, and inflict on them such a severe lesson, as would keep them away for some time to come. The troops were superior in numbers, better armed, and had several mountain guns, so that there need not

have been much difficulty in gaining a decided victory.

The firing continued with little intermission till five in the afternoon. Thousands upon thousands of cartridges must have been consumed on both sides, and it was supposed that the losses would have been very considerable. About five o'clock the troops began to descend the hill, and shortly afterwards marched into the town in detachments. The excitement in Bilbao, and the desire to know the result of the long day's work was naturally great; but it was not possible even to Spaniards, to get up a tale of success to either side. Nothing, absolutely nothing, had been done. It seemed almost incredible that such an amount of powder and ball could have produced no further achievement than one killed on either side!—in each case shot in the back by his own party.

On further enquiry it appeared that it was only through accident that the troops had

come at all to Bilbao, and that the General was afraid of risking his men's lives by any serious operations in the defence of the ill-fated town. His only object in sallying forth was to make some purposeless reconnaissances, and to destroy any houses which might afford shelter to the Carlists. Two days later about 4,000 troops went down to Portugalete, and from thence to Desierto; but contented themselves with leaving a small detachment to assist the defence of those places. Thus ended all attempts made for relieving Bilbao by the valiant army of the North.

A day or two afterwards Sanchez Bregua, with his army, marched for Vittoria, leaving the town and its inhabitants as badly off as before, and their enemies all the bolder for the unsuccessful demonstration against them.

However, the arrival of the troops in Bilbao had the effect of determining A. and R. to take advantage of the temporary retirement of the Carlists from the banks of the river: and as the

steamer 'Campanil,' which had returned to Bilbao about a fortnight before, and was lying below Zorrosa, was to leave in a day or two, they obtained the necessary permits, and succeeded in driving down the right bank, taking with them what baggage they could in a light carriage, and got safely on board. It was fortunate that they did so, for an hour or two later the Carlists, emboldened by the inactivity of the troops, returned to the left bank of the river, and recommenced firing on every boat or vehicle that dared to pass.

The same afternoon the ship steamed down the Nervion, and passed the bar in safety. Just inside the bar a boat was waiting, full of ladies and children, with a large amount of luggage They proved to be an unfortunate family from Santurce, waiting in the hope of persuading the captain to take them on board and carry them to England, away from the troubles and dangers of their own country. Unfortunately there were already as many passengers on board as

could possibly be stowed away, and the captain, though it evidently went to his heart to do so, was obliged to refuse to increase the number, and the wretched people were left to return to the troubled shores of their own land.

After a passage at first rough, and afterwards delayed by thick fog, A. and R. landed safely in Cardiff on September 1, and have for the present ended their personal experience of Spanish life and civil war.

From that time my information respecting the state of affairs in the North of Spain has been derived from letters and papers received by A. from Bilbao, and does not amount to much more than has been published in English newspapers. A few details, however, may be worth mentioning.

Immediately after the departure of Sanchez Bregua and his army, the Carlists reoccupied all the positions they had deserted, and recommenced firing with renewed vigour. One of

their first proceedings was to prepare a 'fire barge,' with the hope of setting fire to the Spanish gunboat lying off Portugalete, and by this means remove the chief obstacle to their operations against that place. Their scheme, however, which was concocted and carried out by an ex-commander of a Spanish ship, who had joined the Carlists, met with the failure which such a diabolical plot deserved, and their barge, after floating harmlessly down the river, went quietly out to sea and burnt itself out. This attempt, and one to block the river by sinking barges across the channel, and which was also a failure, thanks to the barges being carried off by an extraordinary high tide, constituted the only important aggressive acts on the part of the Carlists during September and October.

There were petty annoyances from both sides to those Englishmen who had remained in the country. For instance, A.'s foreman, having one day come into Bilbao from the

mine, and started to return with a few necessaries, had everything taken from him at the Republican outposts, on the pretence that he was friendly to the Carlists, and was carrying provisions to them; and it was not till after strong remonstrances by the Consul that the Governor, who at first refused to interfere in the matter, could be persuaded to give the order for the restitution of the goods.

About the same time the Carlists were constantly visiting the mine, and carrying off anything that took their fancy—such things as tools, iron bars, and dynamite being most in request. They would also force the drivers of the bullock carts to transport for them war material and provisions, and keep the carts and oxen for several days together.

The Spanish local newspapers at this time, not having sufficient grounds, even for *their* consciences, to found reports of Republican bravery and Republican victories, were obliged to content themselves with accounts of the dis-

satisfaction with the Carlist cause; numerous instances of revolt among the men, and petty quarrels between the chiefs, being quoted in proof. There is, however, very good reason for disbelieving these reports, and the sequel has certainly proved that, if such dissatisfaction ever existed, it failed to lead to any results.

About the beginning of November regular siege operations were recommenced against Portugalete, trenches dug, and earth-works thrown up, and by the middle of the month a gun was actually in position, and, still more wonderful, was actually fired; but to judge from the account A. received, the damage done by it could not have been extensive. His correspondent said on the subject, 'I think it was on Monday night that the Carlists placed a cannon near Portugalete, and are now making the place shake; one of them, however, told me they had no balls, only powder, but "the Republicans did not know that."'

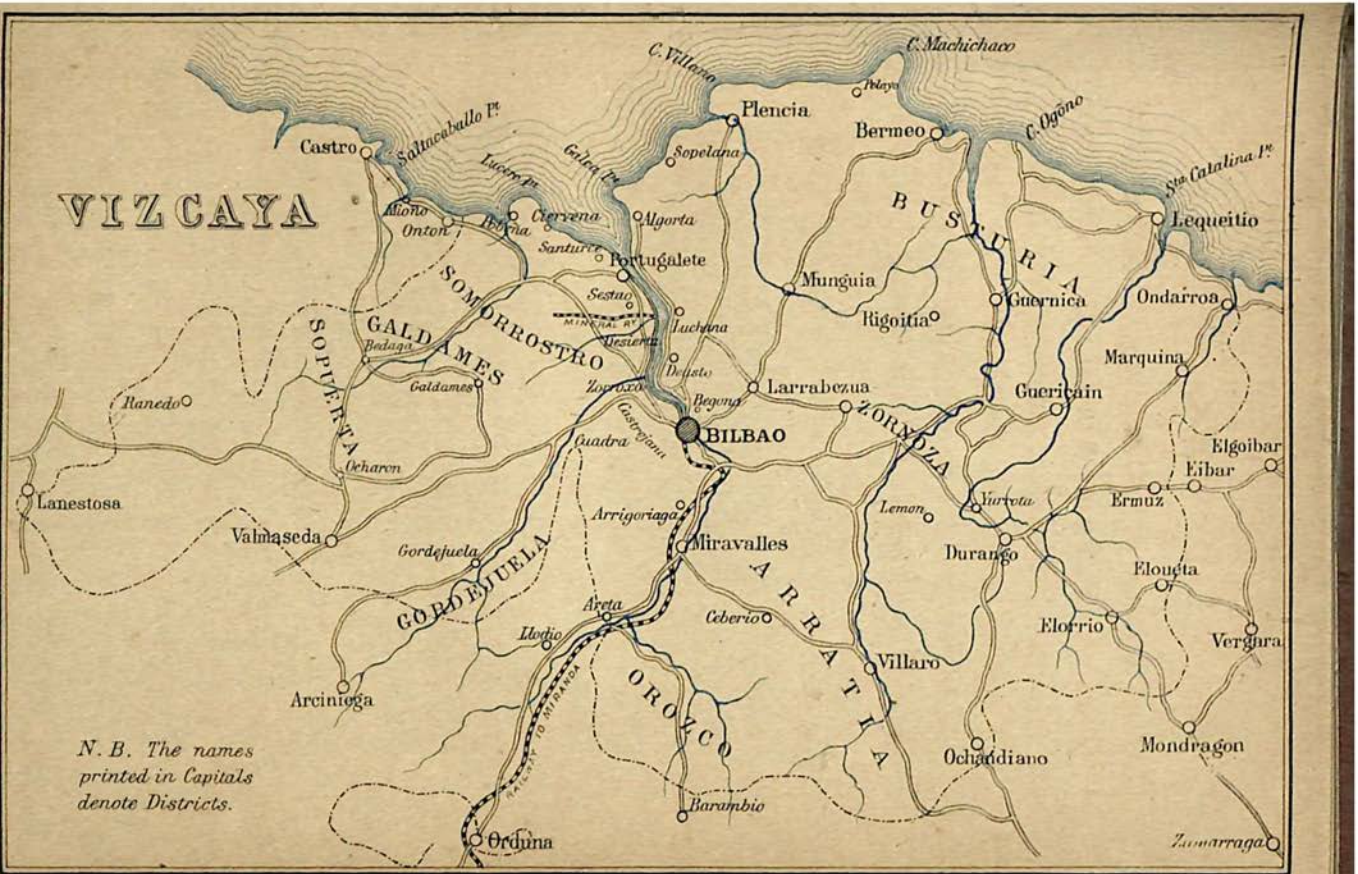
The accounts in December described affairs

as getting worse and worse. From Castro we hear that the Carlists are taking away all the men, eating up all the bullocks, and purloining all the money and everything portable, even down to copper water-vessels. At the same time news comes from the Bilbao district of increased property taxes being levied by the Carlists, and of another heavy contribution being required from the unfortunate peasants, those who are unable to pay being sold out of house and home until they have 'paid the uttermost farthing.'

The last news comes through Santander, and brings intelligence of the attempt of Moriones to reach Bilbao, and subsequent failure and retreat; and finally we hear of the most decisive blow that has yet been struck against Bilbao in the closing of the river, and consequently the complete blockade of the town by land and water.

The chance now of getting further news is very small, and we have to be content with the scraps of intelligence that appear in the English papers. The latest accounts seem to say that

both Bilbao and Portugalete still hold out; but their surrender cannot be far off, cut off as they are from all supplies: unless, indeed the long-hoped-for assistance should arrive in time to dash this cup of triumph from the expectant lips of Don Carlos and his followers.



London, Henry S. King & Co.

K. Weller, Luho

PART II.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE NORTH OF SPAIN.

THE North of Spain, or, more strictly speaking, the Basque Provinces, of which Vizcaya is the most important, though nominally subject to the authority of the central Government are in many respects in the position of an independent State, having their own peculiar laws or 'Fueros,' and enjoying many privileges, such as exemption from military service, which are not accorded to other provinces.

The country, which till of late years had been little visited by English people, is well worth seeing, the combination of coast and mountain scenery being here met with in perfection. The bold rocky outline of the coast, with its numerous headlands and many tranquil

bays, is very striking; while the varied forms of the mountains, from the solitary conical peak to the jagged ridge or 'Sierra,' are most picturesque.

It is difficult to imagine anything more lovely than the view that may be seen on a fine evening from almost any elevated spot in this district. The surrounding hills are lighted with the most beautiful and varied tints of colour, fading gradually into dim distance on one side, and suddenly arrested on another by the blue line of the boundless ocean, studded with the white sails of the numerous ships approaching or leaving the coast; while the foreground is equally varied, and presents many objects of interest or beauty; among which may be seen the richly cultivated 'Vega,' traversed by the broad navigable river, or by the swiftly-flowing mountain stream, and dotted here and there by the ill-constructed, but picturesque dwellings of the peasants; and perhaps at no great distance the more stately buildings of some well-to-do town,

with its more than proportionate supply of church towers.

Nor are signs of life often wanting to give animation to the scene; for it is rare indeed that on one side or other the busy workings of an ironstone quarry may not be descried, with the workmen in their quaint costumes, and the long line of toiling oxen dragging their heavy loads along the steep and tortuous mountain roads.

But perhaps the most enchanting spots are to be found in the quiet and sequestered valleys, or in the numerous ravines by which these mountains are so freely intersected. Here solitude, undisturbed by sound or sign of life, may be found; the almost death like stillness being only broken by the ripple of the clear mountain stream; as like a silver thread it winds its way towards the sea, now gliding evenly along its course, and anon leaping from rock to rock, as if, impatient of its narrow

bounds, and lonely haunts, it wished to hurry on towards the busy world.

Here, also, may be found, in all the luxuriant beauty of their natural growth, the wide-spreading chestnut tree, the bay, and the holly; and, thickly clothing the sides of the hills, the red-berried arbutus; while in the narrow gorges, sheltered by the overhanging rocks, and washed by the spray of the falling stream, the rarest ferns need not be sought in vain. But such spots must be seen to be appreciated; nor do I know with what place to compare this district: perhaps a combination of the bold scenery to be found in North Wales with the secluded valleys of Devonshire might form a somewhat similar, but less attractive scene.

However, it is more by the riches than the beauties of nature that those foreigners, who have visited this district, have been attracted; for these hills may truly be described as mines of wealth. Although in some parts lead, tin, and calamine have been found in sufficient

quantities to handsomely repay the cost of working, still the chief product of the district, and particularly of the neighbourhood of Bilbao, is iron. This metal is extremely abundant, of first-rate quality, and easily worked; and it may be said that the recent prosperity of many towns in the north of Spain is due to the export trade caused by the high prices and increasing demand for iron.

This trade has introduced a considerable amount of foreign capital, has created a large demand for labour, has increased the population, both of foreigners and natives, has brought many ships and steamers from all parts, most of them laden with cargo of some sort; thus improving both the import and internal trade, and showing no small results in the returns of the custom-house. With the exception of iron, there is no export of importance from these provinces, small quantities of grain, and sardines preserved in oil, being the only other commodities worth mentioning.

There are a few iron works in this neighbourhood, but none of any importance when compared to the colossal establishments of this class in our own country.

Almost everything that can be considered a luxury is imported, either from England or France; as well as almost all sorts of groceries, cloth, linen, cutlery, and other things too numerous to mention. The chief imports, however, are coal and 'bacalao,' or dried cod fish, which forms the main article of food among the poorer classes, and takes the place in a Spanish peasant's household that bacon does in an English labourer's.

The duties upon all imports are excessive, and the manner of levying them vexatious. The custom-house officials are as a rule overbearing, uncivil, and extremely lazy; and I have seen many an unhappy Englishman deprived for days of the whole of his baggage because he had neglected, through ignorance, to conform exactly to some one of the many absurd and un-

necessary regulations, or made to pay heavily upon goods on which no duty was legally chargeable.

I was myself unfairly taxed in this way soon after I arrived in the country, and had great difficulty, though I eventually succeeded by applying to head-quarters at Madrid, in recovering the amount paid, minus about twenty per cent. deducted by the local officials. A foreigner arriving in Spain should at once procure the assistance, by introduction, if possible, of a local Spanish ship-broker, and not attempt to do business of this description personally.

Many of the duties imposed are for the purpose of protecting trade, and are enormously high; that on a four-wheeled carriage, for example, of any description, and whether new or old, is 4,000 reals. Notwithstanding, it is almost impossible to buy a good carriage in this district, and if you do succeed in getting one built it will probably be, as mine was, by a French-

man, all the fittings and adjustments having been brought from France.

It is only natural that these excessive duties should make every article not purely Spanish very dear, and such is the case, though this is partly due to the enormous percentage of profit charged by the merchant or shopkeeper; so much so, that I generally found it better to buy almost everything in England, and pay freight and duty thereon. Among those things which may be bought better and cheaper in the country than elsewhere are wine, cigars, olives, sugar, coffee, figs, raisins, silk and cotton handkerchiefs, woollen scarves, coarse blankets, and particularly oil, and chocolate.

In a Spanish town the shops, except those of very recent date, are by no means pretentious, and it frequently happens that the best articles will be found in some pokey little shop in a narrow back street. The keeper of such a shop is often worth 10,000*l.* or 20,000*l.*, but still he will sit there all day and haggle with the

meanest customer over a few cuartos; but should you chance to meet the same man out of his shop, either on the boulevard or at the theatre, you would hardly recognise him, and his familiarity would considerably surprise you, as he shook your hand and conversed with you on the passing events of the day, taking particular care to enquire all about your affairs, and anxious to learn the minutest details of your daily life.

The more imposing shops are generally kept by a rather superior, though often poorer, class. The young man, who here serves you in the morning, will claim your acquaintance in the evening at the club, and challenge you to a game of billiards or cards; and you will find him on a footing of perfect equality with the merchants, officers, and others that compose the upper classes. This is one of the most striking peculiarities in North Spanish life, and seems at first hardly to agree with one's notions of Spanish pride; yet this very pride explains the anomaly, for it is from the idea of his own nobility, inhe-

rent in the breast of every Northern Spaniard, that this feeling of equality springs.

In this part of the country, and particularly in commercial towns, very few are absolutely idle, everyone being connected in some way or other with business, though as far as actual hard work is concerned there is not much of it. Business hours generally commence about 9 A.M., and all offices, including banks and government offices, are closed from 1 to 3 P.M. for dinner, after which they reopen, and are closed again at 5 or 8, according to the time of year. During business hours, as well as later in the day, an immense deal of talking is got through: in the offices and in the streets during the day, and at the club or café in the evening. These conversations are most animated and noisy, and seem to require an immense amount of gesticulation.

It is most amusing to watch an assemblage of these orators when any subject of special interest is on the tapis; to notice how

each man in turn will work himself up into a perfect frenzy of excitement, when just as you think he must have a fit, or burst a blood vessel, he will suddenly subside and give place to some other; but gradually, as the interest increases, the patience of each grows less, till at last all begin to talk at once, each one trying to make his voice heard above the others. Any uninitiated looker-on would fancy, from the increasing fury of look, voice, and demeanour of the speakers, that such an amount of apparent rage must inevitably lead to blows; but such is by no means the case, it is merely excitement, not anger, which produces such scenes.

A stranger might naturally enquire what was the subject of these lively debates: the answer would be always the same—Politics! Every Spaniard is a politician, and in his own opinion *the* one man in the country capable of undertaking the duties of prime minister; and his sole object in life seems to be to explain to

his friends what he would do if he had a voice in the government of the country, and to point out to them the many faults and failings of those actually in power.

The greater part of the life of these men is spent in public, as with the exception of the dinner in the middle of the day they hardly ever enter their houses from morning till night; nor do they honour their wives and families with much of their society. Even at the theatre the wife, with her friends or children, may be seen in a box, while the husband must be looked for among his male friends in the stalls, or some other part of the house. The consequence is that there is very little entertaining of any sort, and the visiting is entirely confined to the ladies; while even they are not much given to seeing their friends in this way, but prefer meeting them on the promenade.

A lady's life in this part of Spain is very monotonous. She is generally engaged all the

morning with her household affairs, which she looks after most carefully, and superintends the minutest details of each branch of domestic work. From twelve till two she appears on the promenade; at two she dines; and in winter does not appear again till eight o'clock, when she will be seen, at least two or three nights a week, in her box at the theatre. In summer she will generally be found a second time on the promenade in the evening. She is most regular in her daily attendance to her devotions, usually rising early for this purpose, and never being absent from any of the numerous services appointed for the endless fast and feast days.

She is entirely in the power of the priest, who acquaints himself through her with the smallest particulars of her own and her husband's affairs; and by this means sustains that influence of which the priesthood are so tenacious, and to which may be traced nearly all the ills and misfortunes by which this unhappy country is so constantly beset. Her reading is

entirely regulated by her priestly adviser, who will not, as a rule, even allow the perusal of a newspaper, for fear his disciple should become too worldly wise, and struggle to extricate herself from the thraldom of his tyranny.

Next in importance to 'Godliness,' and long before 'cleanliness,' in the Spanish matron's eyes, is the science of gastronomy. The first meal, if such it can be called, is taken any time between six and nine, and consists of a small cup of chocolate, made so thick that a spoon will stand up in it, with some fancy bread or biscuits, and is invariably followed by a large glass of cold water. This would seem a poor apology to an Englishman for a hearty breakfast; but such is the force of habit, or the nutritious property of chocolate, that the Spaniard is sustained by it till two o'clock, at which hour the 'comida,' or dinner, takes place.

This meal varies so much with different classes, that it is difficult to describe exactly of what it consists; but, to take the case of a tole-

rably well-to-do merchant, the first course would be soup, or frequently the famous 'olla podrida,' composed of all kinds of vegetables, with a slight addition of meat, or perhaps fish, the prevailing taste being of oil and garlic; this will be followed by the 'bouillon' of which the soup was made, accompanied by various kinds of beans boiled plain, and generally with the addition of tomato sauce. Next will appear two courses of entrées, followed by boiled or fried fish with potatoes; and after this again a course of vegetables, succeeded by roast beef, lamb, or chicken, and salad. The 'postre,' literally the last course, includes pastry, which is generally very good, cheese, and dessert. The intervals between the courses are occupied in eating olives, slices of small sausages, strongly flavoured with pimento; tongue, and ham, small plates of each being scattered about the table.

The wine is generally the red wine of the country, claret, and sherry. The whole is washed down by a cup of coffee, and a small

glass of cognac, with which is smoked the cigarette, without which, except when he is eating or sleeping, the Spaniard cannot exist long. This is the last, as well as the first substantial meal of the day; a cup of coffee, or chocolate, and a very light supper about eleven o'clock, being all that is taken after dinner.

The same habits prevail among the peasants, the only difference being that the mid-day meal is eaten at twelve instead of two, and that the fare is coarser and less varied; 'bacalao,' forming the basis of the 'olla podrida,' as well as the 'pièce de resistance' of the meal. Meat is looked upon by the peasants as a luxury beyond their reach, unless under very exceptional circumstances. They do not, however, fare so badly as might be expected, as the bread, of every quality, is always excellent of its kind, and the beans of various sort are nourishing, and by no means disagreeable.

The Northern peasant certainly thrives upon this food, and both man, woman, and child does

his or her share of hard work during the day. The men are, as a rule, strong and active, and work well; while the women are, in proportion, stronger, and capable of doing nearly as much work as the men; they are chiefly employed as carriers, and it is wonderful what weights they will carry on their heads. The appearance of a woman of this class going into the market, with her large round basket full to overflowing of vegetables, her short petticoats of some bright hue, and her many-coloured handkerchief on her head, is very picturesque.

The most curious sight is to see the sardine women, generally the wives or daughters of the fishermen, racing into the market, at a pace of about six miles an hour, which, though apparently a run, is in reality a fair toe and heel walk*; for any attempt at a run would inevitably upset the enormous baskets of sardines which they carry on their heads. These fish are caught in large quantities, and the first in the market fetch a high price, while towards

the end of the day, if the supply has been good, the remnant are sold very cheap.

Among these peasants the power of the priesthood is even more evident than among the higher orders; both men and women being equally subject to the authority of the Church, and firm believers in the absurd superstitions taught by its ministers, and handed down from generation to generation.

The strict observance of the numerous holidays included in the Roman Catholic calendar is insisted upon by the priests, notwithstanding that the Government have from time to time erased several of them. And consequently the peasants, although willing and anxious to work on these days, dare not do so. The result is that although the early part of the day may be spent in attending religious ceremonies, the evening is devoted to dancing and drinking, and the expenditure of hard-won earnings. It cannot be wondered at that these men are thus rendered poor, and

condemned to spend the whole of their lives in the drudgery of daily labour. To this influence of the priests over the peasantry may be attributed the success which has so far attended the cause of Don Carlos.

The dwellings of these poor people remind one forcibly of Irish hovels, as although in some of the larger villages the more modern cottages are not so bad, generally speaking the accommodation is wretched. One peculiarity in the construction of these houses is noticeable, that they are generally two stories high, the upper part only being used for living in; while the ground floor forms at the same time the general store for the produce of the garden or field, and the shelter for the oxen, pigs, and poultry. The interior of the upper story is rude in the extreme; the windows are seldom glazed, merely closed with a wooden shutter, and the furniture, if it can be so called, consists of two or three stools, and a small low table, a few wooden

bedsteads, and mattresses made by filling sacks with the husks and leaves of Indian corn.

The better class of houses, and particularly those in the towns, are large, well built, and very lofty, being often six or seven stories high; the ground floor is generally occupied by an office or shop, while the upper portion is let in flats, which are in many cases again divided into right and left, the staircase forming the centre of the house; each flat, or half flat is occupied by one family.

The principal room in the house is the salon, which is only used on state occasions, and for the reception of visitors. The arrangement of this room is invariable in all houses, and most uncomfortable; the furniture consists of a long sofa, two arm chairs, and six other chairs, all of the same make, and covered with the same stuff, a consol table with a glass over it, and two large candelabra; the floor is polished, and in the centre of the room is a large square rug: anything more stiff or uninviting it is difficult to

imagine. Opening out of the salon are usually two alcoves, which receive a borrowed light through glass doors; these are used as bedrooms, and are preferred to all others, as being perfectly free from all draught or 'fresh air.' The remainder of the bedrooms are small, and generally contain two beds apiece, such a thing as a double bed never being seen. The only comfortable room, and that in which the family live, is the 'comidor,' or dining-room, and here is to be found the only fireplace in the house. Projecting from the window of the salon and comidor there is frequently a small balcony, covered by that of the flat above, and entirely enclosed by glass; this is called the 'mirador,' and forms the favourite seat of the ladies of the household.

The same system is often carried out in the hotels, one or more flats being occupied, according to the size of the establishment, which is occasionally found on the third, or fourth story of a house. One of the greatest

drawbacks to travelling in Spain is the discomfort of the hotels. They are, as a rule, dirty, wanting in the ordinary necessities of life, and the cooking execrable; the only thing that can be said in their favour is that they are cheap. The ordinary charge for board and lodging, including as much of the country wine as you can drink (which is very little), is from six to seven shillings per day. The meals are generally served at the same hours as in France, coffee in the morning, déjeûner at eleven, and dinner at six. Table d'hôtes prevail everywhere; this is especially necessary because the bedrooms are invariably small, and there are never any private sitting-rooms to be had.

Boarding-houses called 'Casas de Huespedes,' are very numerous, and generally more comfortable than the hotels. The charges are about the same. The 'Posada' or inn is very much inferior to the 'Fonda;' and the 'Taberna' or public-house is a mere drinking shop. It is in these taverns that the many brawls,

preceded by drinking bouts and card-playing, and too often followed by some foul murder, take place.

In justice to the Northerners it must be said that they are neither so hot-blooded nor revengeful as their Southern brethren. Their chief failings, and those which so much stand in the way of their advancement, are undoubtedly pride, and an intense jealousy of foreigners. They believe that in all the world no blood is so pure as theirs, no race so noble, no institutions so perfect. Such feelings produce a Toryism, which shuts out all hopes of improvement, and guards so strictly the antiquated customs and ideas of the country, that any progress in civilisation, or participation in the discoveries and inventions of other countries, is almost hopeless.

One other point, particularly remarkable in their characters, is their extreme civility, and apparent hospitality to strangers; but it must not be supposed for a minute that when a

Spaniard places his services, his house, and all that he possesses at your disposition, he has any idea of being taken at his word. These figures of speech are carried so far that in writing to you he dates his letter from 'your,' not 'my,' house, and ends it by kissing your hands. There are, however, many exceptions, and several of those who, having received a good education, generally either in France or England, are liberal in their views, see the faults and necessities of their own country, and say only what they mean.

Generally the most disagreeable among Spaniards are the officials, and government employés. They are arrogant and overbearing, dishonest and corrupt. It is difficult to get an audience of them; and even if one succeeds the result is seldom satisfactory, unless the way has been previously paved by a sufficient douceur.

In business matters it is necessary to be very careful in dealing with Spaniards; though not openly dishonest, they seldom fail to take an

unfair advantage when the opportunity offers. Their natural habits are dilatory and dawdling, and, even where their own interests are concerned, it is difficult to get them to act with energy or promptitude. This may be partly due to a lassitude produced by the climate; though in the north it cannot be attributed entirely to this cause, for the climate is not remarkable for extremes, though generally it is relaxing, and produces a feeling of depression and weariness.

The heat in summer, though not actually much greater than that experienced occasionally in England, is more constant; the temperature often remaining for days together at an almost equal degree, while the difference at night is very slight. In winter the climate is very like that of the south of Ireland; there is very little frost or snow, but a great deal of cold rain and damp. The most agreeable times of year are spring and the beginning of autumn.

On the whole the climate may be considered

healthy, although it is the fashion among the Spaniards to suppose that it causes diseases of the lungs and consumption. This, however, I am inclined to doubt, and rather believe that the constant irritation of the chest or throat, from which all Spaniards suffer, judging by the disagreeable operations of clearing one so constantly witnesses, arises more from their unhealthy mode of life, and the sudden change from the foul atmosphere of their houses to the fresh air, than from any peculiarities of the climate.

Such is a brief sketch of the country and people of the northern provinces of Spain at the present time. There is doubtless much to find fault with and much room for improvement, but the country abounds in natural resources, and is capable of becoming rich and important; and it is to be hoped that when the unhappy differences, which now arrest all progress, are finally settled, and a firm but popular government is in power, these resources may be

the means of procuring a certain and increasing prosperity, and that the march of knowledge and education may prepare the minds of the rising generation for the reception of more enlightened and liberal views, and disabuse them of the many prejudices and superstitions, which now stand in the way of their advancement.

Iron Mines.

Within the last few years the increased demand for iron ore in England, France, and Belgium has attracted the attention of capitalists to the large and rich deposits in the northern provinces of Spain, more especially in the neighbourhood of Bilbao, along the west bank of the river Nervion, and by the coast to Castro in the province of Santander. The richest of these deposits is that found in the Somorrostro district, by which name the ore is known, though sometimes called 'Campanil.'

This ore, which is a red hæmatite, containing from 50 to 60 per cent. of metallic iron, is

in great repute, and is largely employed by the ironmasters of South Wales, and the North of England. The other deposits consist chiefly of brown hæmatite and spathose ores, equally rich in iron, but containing a larger proportion of insoluble matter, and which do not command so high a price as the ores of Somorrostro.

These ores are chiefly deposited in mountain limestone, and are worked entirely in quarries, the nearly vertical lie of the veins, and the steepness of the mountain sides obviating the necessity of underground workings.

It is evident, from the frequent occurrence of old workings, and the discovery of slag and refuse from furnaces, that these mines were worked by the ancients, although the oldest inhabitants of the district have no recollection of works in their day.

It being only very recently that the attention of foreigners has been drawn to these mines, the workings are as yet in a very incomplete state, and the means of transport to the river

totally inadequate. This service is at present conducted almost entirely by bullock carts of the most primitive description, which, however picturesque they may appear descending and ascending the rough and steep mountain roads in endless streams, are by no means calculated either for rapid or economical transport of such heavy material as iron ore. The price of transport by this means has latterly become so high that the distance from the river at which a mine can be profitably worked is very limited.

There is one single line of railway, constructed a few years ago by the 'Diputacion' of Bilbao, from the foot of the Somorrostro hills to a point on the river called 'San Nicolas,' about three miles above the mouth, with shipping stages and shoots in communication with the railway. This line, however, being only capable of carrying from 200,000 to 300,000 tons per annum, is by no means sufficient for the requirements of the district.

Many well-known English companies are now actually working iron ore mines in the neighbourhood, most of whom are constructing private mineral railways and shipping stages. The Wire Rope Tramway Company have also erected two lines, each capable of carrying about 500 tons per day. The most extensive works are those being carried out by the Galdames Company. Their mines, from which the company takes its name, are the finest in the neighbourhood, and comprise one cliff of ore about a mile long and from 200 to 300 feet in height. Their railway, now nearly completed, will be about fifteen miles in length. It presented many engineering difficulties, and involved innumerable curves and steep gradients. After passing through a tunnel 600 yards long it emerges on the shore just above Portugalete, where extensive quay works are now in course of construction.

Most of these works, if not entirely stopped, have been very much delayed, and great loss

caused to the promoters by the unfortunate state of the country and the Carlist rising.

No small difficulties have to be overcome before the actual construction of a railway, or any other work requiring the sanction either of the Government or the local authorities, can be proceeded with, and the time wasted and annoyance caused by the numerous delays arising from the dilatory habits of Spanish officials, coupled with the ambiguity of the laws affecting these questions, are very trying to the patience of anyone accustomed to regularity and despatch in business transactions.

The constant douceurs required, and the exorbitant prices now asked for worthless land, involving never-ending arbitrations, considerably increase the preliminary outlay.

The workmen employed in the mines are chiefly from the neighbourhood, though the present increased demand has caused the immigration of large numbers from the southern provinces. The contrast between the Biscayans,

who are fine powerful men, and, as a rule, good steady workmen, and the Southerners, who are small, weak, and almost useless, is very striking; and herein doubtless lies the superiority of the Carlist forces over the Republican troops.

The neighbourhood, which till lately was thinly populated, is scantily supplied with house accommodation, and although the new comers are by no means fastidious, there is a limit even to their ideas of the small amount of space necessary for an individual; from this cause labour is in some parts scarce, and the state of affairs will not be improved by the fact of the Republican troops having lately burnt down many of the best houses in the mountain districts, on the ground that they afforded shelter to the Carlists.

The majority of the able-bodied workmen have now joined the Carlist forces, some from choice, others from necessity; as, although all are Carlists at heart, there are many who are satisfied to be so in name only, and are not

desirous of running any personal risk for their country's good.

Perhaps the most important consideration in connection with the iron mines is the state of the river, and the difficulty of shipping the ore; and although this difficulty will be modified by the completion of the various quays and shipping stages, now in course of construction, the obstacles to the free ingress and egress of vessels at all times will remain so long as the works, so often proposed and as surely abandoned, for the construction of a harbour and the improvement of the river are not executed. During the last year very serious losses have been incurred by shipowners and exporters (independently of those caused by the disturbances of the country) owing to the detention of vessels in the river, sometimes for many weeks, on account of the state of the tides, the weather, and the dangerous bar at the entrance of the port.

Such is the present state of the iron ore

trade in Vizcaya; but there is reason to hope that when quiet is once more restored in these turbulent districts the works already in progress may be finally completed, and those now proposed may be commenced. And then this trade must become one of the most important in the country, and bring with it increased prosperity and civilisation to a district, beautiful and pleasant by nature, and at the same time endowed with so large a share of hidden wealth.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018